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The Emergence of Early Sufi Piety and Sunnī Scholasticism

*ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak and the Formation of Sunnī
Identity in the Second Islamic Century*

By

Feryal Salem



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Introduction

In ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak (118–181/736–797) we find a figure who was considered by many a paragon in the fields of *ḥadīth*, *zuhd*, and *jihād*, as attested to by the large number of references to him in classical Islamic sources. His expertise and superior rank as a *ḥadīth* transmitter even earned him the title “commander of the faithful” among some later critics.¹ He contributed to Islamic law during its early phases of development, performed *jihād*, composed poetry, and participated in theological discussions. In addition, Ibn al-Mubārak was a pioneer in writing on piety and was later regarded by many mystics to be one of the earliest Sufi figures.² The biography of Ibn al-Mubārak, who lived during the formative period of Islamic thought, gives us insight into the evolution of *zuhd*, *ḥadīth*, and *jihād*; indeed his life and works distinctively illuminate the second/eighth-century dynamics of the nascent Sunnī tradition. Furthermore, Ibn al-Mubārak’s status as a fighter and pious figure of the Late Antique period reveals a great deal about the complex relationship between the early Muslim community and the religiously diverse setting they inhabited. Yet, despite the importance of the figure of ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak, to date no comprehensive and critical work has been composed on him in English. Nor has there been a study that situates him within the larger context of Late Antiquity and examines his interactions with the various perceptions of piety and martial valor prevalent in this period. The present study attempts to do these things.

‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak’s significance to Islamic history is based on several factors. First, Ibn al-Mubārak’s life reveals the practical application of many aspects of Islamic practice that are often only, or principally, studied from a

1 Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ‘Alī (al-Khaṭīb) al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād aw madīnat al-salām*, ed. Muḥammad Amīn al-Khanjī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1931), 10:156 [henceforth al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī *Tārīkh Baghdād*]. *Ḥadīth* scholars agreed by consensus that Ibn al-Mubārak was not only a reliable transmitter but also among the foremost *ḥadīth* scholars of his era. However, Muslim scholars differ in regard to his title and rank as a *ḥadīth* master. Some later scholars gave him the title “amīr al-mu’minīn,” the highest authority possible in *ḥadīth* transmission, while others gave him the title “ḥāfiẓ,” also one of the highest ranks in *ḥadīth* transmission, but short of the exceptional qualifications of “amīr al-mu’minīn.” The preferred or more common title used by Muslim scholars appears to be “ḥāfiẓ.” Al-Dhahabī gave him the title “*al-inām al-ḥāfiẓ al-‘allāma shaykh al-Islām, fakhṛ al-mujāhidīn qudwat al-zāhidīn*.” See Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, ed. Zakariyyā ‘Umayrāt, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1998), 1:274–275.

2 Ibn al-Mubārak’s book, *Kitāb al-Zuhd* is a book of *ḥadīths* dedicated solely to matters related to piety. The contents give valuable insight into the ways in which piety was identified in Ibn al-Mubārak’s lifetime and for the early Muslim community.

textual perspective. Many texts deal with *zuhd*, *jihād*, and *ḥadīth* on a theoretical level; in the biography of Ibn al-Mubārak we find a behavioral model of a figure who put these ideals into action. He was a *mujāhid*, *muḥaddith* (traditionist), and *zāhid* and achieved prominence among the early Muslim community as a quintessential model in each of these fields. As a result, he is an important figure who not only personifies the developing Sunnī milieu of his time but was also a significant force in shaping early Islamic history and identity. The latter is demonstrated by the overwhelming number of references to him in primary sources which evoke his example.

Second, ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak lived during the early formative period of Islamic history, a time in which the schools of law, the field of *ḥadīth* sciences, and conceptions of Islamic piety were still developing. In Ibn al-Mubārak’s life we see a living depiction of many aspects of this period and these depictions enable us to better understand the dynamics of the factors involved in shaping the later fields of *ḥadīth* and law. A study of this pivotal figure, who participated in and contributed to this formative period of Islam, also sheds light on the formation of Sunnī identity, since *ḥadīth* and law were both profound elements of this identity.

Third, ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak was a prominent scholar who transmitted *ḥadīth* from the most important traditionists of his time. He traveled extensively to collect *ḥadīths*, and as a result contributed significantly to the corpus of *ḥadīth* collections that were later compiled. The paramount nature of *ḥadīth* in the life of this figure is also reflected in the fact that *ḥadīth* permeates all of the fields he was involved with, particularly *zuhd* and *jihād*. His compilations on these topics are essentially books of *ḥadīth*, though not all prophetic *ḥadīth*.³ Furthermore, his *Kitāb al-Zuhd* and *Kitāb al-Jihād* are among the earliest works, if not *the* earliest works, of their genres.

Ibn al-Mubārak also played an important role as a *mujāhid* on the Arab-Byzantine frontiers. His compilation of the *Kitāb al-Jihād* is an important contribution to the genre of works on *jihād* and his prominence as a figure of piety and scholarship who also participated in *jihād* set a precedent that was followed by a significant number of scholars and aspiring scholars. Ibn al-Mubārak fought the Byzantines when Muslims were still a minority; a study on his life thus raises many questions on the dynamics of the relationship between the three monotheistic faiths during this transformative period. This study of Ibn al-Mubārak’s life as a *mujāhid* in the frontier lands (*thughūr*) provides further information about the nature of Muslim martial pursuits in early Islamic history.

3 I use the term *ḥadīth* in the general sense of the term, as inclusive of the *ḥadīth* sayings of the Prophet and the sayings of those from the early Muslim community.

Finally, Ibn al-Mubārak is also a crucial figure in early Islamic piety. His *Kitāb al-Zuhd* is one of the first works in this genre; it was followed by many other *kutub al-zuhd* composed by other pious figures. His definition of *zuhd* as a broad spectrum of virtues taught by the Prophet and the early Muslim community laid the foundation on which many later Sufi figures further developed the Sufi tradition. His form of piety, which is often depicted as one that shunned worldliness without shunning the world itself, was a practice that he shared with many other *ḥadīth* transmitters. Because piety was an important criterion in determining the uprightness of a transmitter (*ʿadāla*), a study of Ibn al-Mubārak's piety facilitates a better understanding of the form of piety upheld by the networks of *ḥadīth* transmitters. He was praised in primary sources on *ḥadīth* reference texts and in books of Sufism, in fact the consensus among these sources indicates that his piety was praised by a wide range of his scholarly circle of peers. Since the *muḥaddithūn* of Islam's formative period were the bedrock of the then developing Sunnī identity, a more profound understanding of the vision of piety espoused by these scholars is important because it inevitably influenced later conceptions of what types of devotional practices are considered essential to and within the bounds of Sunnī Islam.⁴

4 Later Sunnī scholars, particularly after the third/ninth century, make mention of what they refer to as *ghulāt min al-ṣūfiyya* or excessive Sufis, those they believe exceeded the bounds of acceptable practice. For example, ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī lists numerous categories of Muslims from the ranks of the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa* and includes figures such as *ḥadīth* transmitters, those guarding the *thughūr*, and jurists as well as Sufis. However, he qualified the category of Sufis by adding the theological positions and attitudes that fit his definition of the followers of the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa*. See ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-firaq wa-bayān firqā al-nājiya minhum*, ed. Muḥammad ʿUthmān Khisht (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Ibn Sinā, 1988), 273–274.

Biography of ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak

The Sources of Ibn al-Mubārak’s Biography

Contemporary scholars of Islam have brought to the forefront important concerns regarding the reliability of reports found in classical sources and the extent to which accurate narratives of the past can be constructed. A variety of approaches to this critical inquiry into early Islamic sources have shaped much of the discourse in recent literature that has emerged in western studies of Islam. Fred Donner presents a valuable chronology of the ways in which western historians of the past two centuries have dealt with what they viewed as conflicting reports and uncertainties about the reliability of the early source material.¹ Donner convincingly argues that what he terms the “descriptive” and the “skeptical” approach each involve problematic elements in their methodology and these affect their ability to accurately assess historical accounts. The descriptive approach, according to Donner, was a significant divergence from the highly polemical depictions of Islamic history common in European scholarship prior to the nineteenth century. Donner argues that the works of scholars such as Philip K. Hitti,² Edward Gibbon,³ William Muir,⁴ G. E. von Grunebaum,⁵ and many others from the nineteenth century onward relied upon the limited primary sources available at that time and assumed that these works depicted the early Islamic period accurately. In the second half of the twentieth century, with the surge of publications of Arabic texts, many of the unedited manuscripts became easily accessible in modern text formats and many variant reports of early historical narratives emerged. These new

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- 1 Cf. Fred Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1988), 1–31. Donner categorizes these into four approaches: the descriptive approach, the source-critical approach, the tradition-critical approach, and the skeptical approach. His refutation of the skeptical approach convincingly argues that this methodology was often ideologically driven and lacks sufficient evidence to reasonably support claims of the later creation of an Islamic orthodoxy and the expulsion of contradictory evidence.
 - 2 Philip Khuri Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (London: Macmillan, 1951).
 - 3 Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (New York: Kelmscott, 1845).
 - 4 William Muir, *The Life of Mahomet: From Original Sources* (London: Smith, Elder, 1877), and *The Caliphate: Its Rise, Decline, and Fall, from Original Sources* (Edinburgh: J. Grant, 1915).
 - 5 Gustave E. von Grunebaum, *Classical Islam: A History, 600–1258* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1970).

sources forced historians to revise their methods of uncritically relying on historical accounts of the early Islamic period.⁶

The second half of the twentieth century also witnessed the emergence of what Donner categorizes as the “skeptical approach.”⁷ This school of western scholarship on Islam surfaced out of the skepticism of one of the most influential orientalist scholars, Ignaz Goldziher, and later his intellectual disciple, Joseph Schacht. Goldziher was among the first to claim that *ḥadīth* literature was for the most part a fabrication of later Muslim figures who were intent on producing evidence to justify their own interests by using false chains of transmission to authenticate their claims. His two-volume work, *Muhammadenische Studien*,⁸ laid the foundations upon which Schacht later argued that the fabrication of *ḥadīth* correlates to the development of Islamic schools of law in the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries. Schacht claimed that early Muslim legists created prophetic traditions in the form of *ḥadīth* to justify legal rulings based on regional schools.⁹

Muhammad Azami wrote a formidable refutation of Schacht’s *Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, but his polemical tone throughout the text and, perhaps, the exceptionally specialized nature of the debate prevented this otherwise important work from reaching a broader audience among western academics.¹⁰ The “skeptical approach” gained momentum in the decades following Schacht’s scholarship with a number of scholars who promoted a radically alternate version of early Islamic history; this version essentially argues that Islam in its present form is the result of formulations that took place in the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries. John Wansborough argues that the Qurʾān was a text that took form later in an environment of sectarian division; he elaborates on this further in his earlier study, *Sectarian Milieu*.¹¹ Patricia Crone distinguished herself by asserting that Islam began as a Jewish messianic movement which later fabricated an early Islamic history

6 Donner, *Narratives*, 5–9.

7 See Donner, *Narratives*, 20–31 for a more detailed presentation.

8 Ignác Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 2 vols. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1971).

9 Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950).

10 Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Aʿzamī, *On Schacht’s Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1996).

11 See John E. Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), and John E. Wansbrough and Andrew Rippin, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2004).

through back projection.¹² It was even claimed that the Prophet Muḥammad was a later invention of this movement—part of its Arabization—and the Qurʾān was a redaction of Judeo-Christian texts that were later formulated into a text. This attempt to attribute Judeo-Christian origins to Islam and its scripture is promoted by other contemporary scholars such as Gabriel Said Reynolds, Andrew Rippin, and Sidney Griffith.

The recent attempts to problematize the Muslim narrative of its own origins and claim its origins in some form to be in Christianity, either as a heresy or a later development is not new. Lammens, who preceded Schacht's prominence, is regarded in many ways as a precursor to the skeptical trends that develop throughout the later twentieth century. Donner writes regarding the approach of Lammens:

A precursor of such a radically skeptical position can be found in the works of the Jesuit scholar Henri Lammens who, around the beginning of the twentieth century, published a series of detailed studies on the background and rise of early Islam. These were marked by a (largely implicit) set of source critical assumptions ... Lammens' work sometimes inspired admiration for its erudition (which is, at times, astonishing), but its thinly veiled hostility to Islam was offensive to Muslims and to fair-minded Western scholars alike, and found no real following; moreover, his methodological assumptions were challenged by some of his contemporaries, notably Theodore Noldeke and Carl Heinrich Becker. Becker faulted Lammens for accepting uncritically any accounts that were hostile to Fāṭima, suggesting that Lammens' bias stemmed from his desire as a committed Christian, to discredit the whole family of the Prophet.¹³

We are reminded that the difficulties of accurately depicting religious history are not exclusive to its adherents whose narratives may be shaped by motives related to self-identity, but also apply to the adherents of other faith traditions who may project their own religious paradigms and biases in the process of defining themselves in relation to the other.

The skeptical approach has steadily lost its influence with the emergence of new scholarship that has proven much of their arguments untenable. The beginning of the twenty-first century has seen a new generation of western academics who challenge earlier assumptions, such as the mass fabrication of

12 See Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 120–123.

13 Donner, *Narratives*, 20–21.

ḥadīths by later legal scholars and the second/eighth and third/ninth century invention of an image of early Islam. Scholars such as Harald Motzki and Scott Lucas have made significant contributions to the study of *ḥadīth* origins that challenge the view that the corpus of *ḥadīths* was a wholesale forgery with arbitrary chains of transmission (*isnād*, pl. *asānīd*) attributed to them. Ahmed El Shamsy and Umar Abd-Allah Wymann-Landgraf have also revisited many of the earlier assumptions about the early development of Islamic schools of law and offer exceedingly thorough legal histories.¹⁴ Walid Saleh¹⁵ has written on the Qurʾān while Jonathan Brown¹⁶ and Asma Afsaruddin¹⁷ have made important contributions to the study of the evolution of “orthodoxy” in the Muslim world through the history of canonization and political leadership. These are only a few of the many recent works on the early period of Islam that have significantly transformed the field. Many of these scholars have turned their attention to primary Islamic texts and engage the valuable findings in the western study of Islam with the works of classical Islamic studies to arrive at more nuanced conclusions. This approach brings invaluable perspectives that are cognizant of the problems of accepting historical reports at face value and still appreciative of the richness of the classical literature on Islam and the usefulness of examining the historic scholarship of the many Muslim intellectuals who made painstaking efforts to discriminate between historical truths and falsehoods.

In composing a monograph on an early figure such as ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak, it is imperative to consider the question of what approach will be taken in utilizing information in the classical sources. I have highlighted some of the potential dangers of taking historical reports at face value as well as the weakness of an overly skeptical approach that often expunges a significant portion of historical information only to replace it with questionable hypotheses that lack a sound methodological basis. In addition, it is critical to recognize that virtually all hermeneutical approaches that either attempt to interpret or selectively choose what appears to be “factual” in historical texts ultimately reflect the epistemological approach of the historian himself

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- 14 See Ahmed El Shamsy, *The Canonization of Islamic Law: A Social and Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); and Umar F. Abd-Allah Wymann-Landgraf, *Mālik and Medina: Islamic Legal Reasoning in the Formative Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).
 - 15 Walid A. Saleh, *The Formation of Classical Tafsīr Tradition: The Qurʾān Commentary of al-Thaʿlabī (d. 427/1035)* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).
 - 16 Jonathan Brown, *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunni Ḥadīth Canon* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).
 - 17 Asma Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence: Medieval Islamic Discourse on Legitimate Leadership* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

or herself. Though not impossible, it is exceedingly difficult to approach historical texts without imposing contemporary predispositions, suspicions, cognitive frameworks, and paradigms in some form. Indeed, source criticism can be a double-edged sword that reveals the biases of the present even as it attempts to expose the biases of the past.

Taking the above into consideration, I have adopted an approach that demonstrates how the classical sources portray aspects of the life of Ibn al-Mubārak, without either rejecting information that cannot be factually disproven or unequivocally accepting the veracity of all that is reported about this early figure. Hence, in this chapter I provide a narrative of how the historical literature on Ibn al-Mubārak depicts his life without eliminating or selectively including the many aspects of these narratives that simply cannot be confirmed or proven inaccurate at present. In chapter 2, on *ḥadīth*, I analyze the narrative of Ibn al-Mubārak's life and works to address questions on the authenticity of historical reports in greater detail by comparing Ibn al-Mubārak's biography to the portrayal of other figures, such as Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, as well as the reliability of the *isnād* system and networks of scholars to which *ḥadīths* are attributed in their transmission. In the remaining chapters, I highlight relevant entries from the classical texts and analyze them within the context of the circumstances of Ibn al-Mubārak's era in an attempt to derive not only a general picture of this figure, but also some of the trends and developments in the formative period of Sunnī Islam as reflected in his life.

Finally, it must be noted that even unverifiable historical narratives remain significant for the way in which the general corpus of these reports in the classical texts depict an ontological truth about how early Muslims themselves viewed Islamic scholars and their work. This is yet another essential theme in this study of the life and times of Ibn al-Mubārak, which, when coupled with an examination of how the Sunnī scholastic tradition developed and defined itself demonstrates the sophistication of Sunnī theology and practice.

‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak: His Life and Career as Presented in Classical Texts

‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Marwazī *Mawlā Banī Ḥanzāla* was born in 118/736¹⁸ to a father of Turkic descent and a mother of Khawriz-

18 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tarīkh Baghdād*, 10:154. Another report, cited in the same source, states that he was born in 119/737. The earlier date is the more commonly accepted as there are more reports to this effect.

mī lineage.¹⁹ It is reported that his father was a *mawlā* to a merchant from Hamadhān and that he was eventually married to his master's daughter after a well-known incident, described in classical sources, demonstrated Mubārak's trustworthiness. Ibn Khallikān and others report various versions of a narrative that relate that Ibn al-Mubārak's father used to work in the orchard of his master; one day he was told to bring his master a sweet pomegranate. Ibn al-Mubārak's father replied that he could not tell the difference between the sweet and the sour ones since he had never tasted them. When questioned why he had never tasted them, he replied that he had never been given permission to and hence he had abstained from doing so. The master was impressed by the young man's trustworthiness, and later asked him about one of his daughters who had received many marriage proposals; he said, "O Mubārak, whom do you think is worthy of marrying this girl?" He replied, "The people of ignorance (*Jahiliyya*) used to marry for lineage, the Jews for wealth, and the Christians for beauty, and this [Muslim] nation for [soundness] in religion." Being impressed once again by the sagacity of this answer, he married his daughter to Mubārak.²⁰ While we cannot ascertain the veracity of this account, it is nevertheless important as a depiction of Ibn al-Mubārak's image in later biographical sources. This is also one of the only details available about Ibn al-Mubārak's parents in the classical sources. There is a brief reference in the *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, in the biography of Abū Tamīla, who says, "My father and Mubārak, the father of ʿAbdallāh, were both merchants and they used to give one dirham to whichever one of us memorized an ode (*qaṣīda*)."²¹ It is likely that if the account of his

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- 19 Ibn al-Jawzī reports that Ibn al-Mubārak's mother was also of Turkic descent; he confirms other sources that she was from the city of Khawarizm. See Abū l-Faraj ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-ṣafīwa*, 4 vols. (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʾārif al-Uthmāniyya, 1972), 4:109.
- 20 Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Khallikān [Ibn Khallikān], *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1972), 3:32–33. ʿAbd al-Ḥayy b. Aḥmad b. al-ʿImad, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*, 8 vols. in 4 (Beirut: Maktab al-Tijārī, 1960), 1:296. ʿAbdallāh b. Asʿad al-Yafīʿī, *Mirʾāt al-jinān wa-ʿibrat al-yaqẓān fī maʾrifat mā yuʿtabar min ḥawādith al-zamān*, ed. Khalil Maṣṣūr, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1997), 1:379. Ibn Khallikān writes that a story similar to this is attributed Ibrāhīm b. Adham in Ṭarṭūshī's *Sirāj al-munīr*. Statements about the piety of the parents of later pious figures are recurring tropes in biographies. Other similar stories include narratives of the meeting of Abū Ḥanīfa's parents.
- 21 Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb fī asmāʾ al-rijāl*, ed. ʿĀdil Aḥmad Mawjūd, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2004), 7:118–119. Abū Tamīla is Yaḥyā b. Waḍīḥ Abū Tamīla al-Anṣārī *mawlāhum* al-Marwazī l-Ḥāfiẓ. Abū Tamīla is generally regarded as a sound transmitter (*thiqa*). The only information we have about this figure is this brief reference in relation to the father of Ibn al-Mubārak.

marrying his master's daughter is true, then he probably began his scholarly his career after his marriage.

ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak was born in Marv and remained there for the early years of his life. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī cites Ibn al-Mubārak as saying, "I remember I was young and I wore black when Abū Muslim came out ... Abū Muslim commanded everyone to wear black, the young and the old."²² This reference appears to indicate that Ibn al-Mubārak lived through a unique historic juncture in which he witnessed the ʿAbbāsīd revolt led by Abū Muslim in his region of Khurasān and the eventual demise of the Umayyad caliphate.

His early years are described as being carefree and far from the scholastic pursuits he engaged in later. Ibn ʿAsākir cites the following conversion narrative attributed to him:

As a young man, I was in the orchard one day with a group of friends. It was during the time fruits were ripe and we ate and drank. And I used to love to play the *ʿūd*. I got up in the middle of the night when a branch was moving above my head. So I reached for the *ʿūd* to play it and it spoke to me saying: "Is not the time ripe for the hearts of those who believe to submit to God's reminder and to the truth which is revealed [Qurʾān, 57:16]." He said: "Whereupon I struck the *ʿūd* onto the ground and broke it. And I did away with all the matters I was involved in that distracted me from God and divine success [*tawfiq*] was granted [to me] from God. Whatever goodness we received was through the favor of God."²³

Sources state that in his early twenties Ibn al-Mubārak left Marv in pursuit of knowledge. His extensive travels are consistently mentioned in the variety of entries and references to Ibn al-Mubārak in classical text sources. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal is reported to have said:

There was no one more vigilant about seeking knowledge during ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak's time than himself. He traveled to Yemen, Egypt, Syria, Basra, Kufa, and he was a transmitter of knowledge and a person of its ranks (*kāna min ruwāt al-ʿilm wa-ahl dhālika*). He wrote [*ḥadīth*] from the young and the old. He wrote from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī²⁴ and

²² al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdad*, 10:154.

²³ ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAsākir [Ibn ʿAsākir], *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, ed. Muḥib al-Dīn Abī Saʿīd ʿUmar b. Gharāma al-ʿAmarawī, 80 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995), 32:406.

²⁴ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī b. Ḥasan b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Anbarī (some say the *mawla* of al-Azdī) Abū Saʿīd al-Baṣrī l-Ḥāfiẓ al-Imām al-ʿAlam (d. 198/813), was a teacher of Ibn

he wrote from al-Fazārī.²⁵ He acquired an immense amount [of knowledge].²⁶

Ibn Abī Ḥatīm reports, “I heard my father say: ‘Ibn al-Mubārak covered a quarter of the earth by traveling in search of *ḥadīth*. He did not leave out Yemen, Egypt, greater Syria, the Arabian Peninsula, Basra or Kufa.”²⁷ Al-Dhahabī gave Ibn al-Mubārak the title of “*al-saffār*,” or one who continually travels and he also described him as a companion of vast and remote journeys.²⁸ Al-Baghdādī relates that Zakariyyā b. ʿAdī²⁹ said, “I saw Ibn al-Mubārak in a dream and so I said ‘What has your Lord done with you?’ He said, ‘He has forgiven me due to my journeys in search of *ḥadīth*.’”³⁰ As I note below, he is reported to have

al-Mubārak and one of the foremost students of Sufyān al-Thawrī. Al-Athram (ʿAmr b. Dīnār Abū Muḥammad al-Athram (d. 126/743), an early Meccan *ḥadīth* scholar who was regarded as a sound transmitter by a consensus of *ḥadīth* scholars) reports that he would wish that people would ask him for *ḥadīths* from others because so many people pursued him for *ḥadīths* he received from Sufyān. Khalilī writes that “he was an *imam* without argument and [Sufyān] al-Thawrī died in his house.” He was known for the strength of his *ḥadīth* transmissions and for delving into matters of jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Al-Shāfiʿī said of him, “I do not know of a peer of his in this world.” Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 4:137–139.

- 25 Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥārith al-Fazārī, Abū Ishāq al-Kūfī (d. 188/803) lived in greater Syria and al-Maṣīṣa. He was a student of Sufyān al-Thawrī, Shuʿba, Mālik, and others. Ibn al-Mubārak and others, including al-Awzāʿī (who was also a teacher of al-Fazārī), transmitted *ḥadīths* from him. He was well-respected as a *ḥadīth* transmitter Abū Ḥatīm ranked him as *thiqa maʾmūn al-imām* and Ibn Maʾīn ranked him as *thiqa thiqa*. He was known to have written a book of *sīra* (the Prophet’s biography) of which al-Shāfiʿī said, “no one has compiled [a book] of *sīra* comparable to his.” Al-Fazārī was also known for fighting in the frontiers (*thughūr*) and was said to have spiritually trained (*addaba*) the people of the *thughūr*. If a person was believed to be a heretic, al-Fazārī was reported to have banished him from the *thughūr*. When Abū Usāma was asked, “Who was better, Abū Ishāq or Fuḍayl b. ʿIyād,” he replied “Fuḍayl was a man who kept to himself whereas Abū Ishāq [al-Fazārī] was a man for all of the people (*kāna rajul ʿamma*).” He also invented the astrolabe and published books concerning this. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 1:143–144.

- 26 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, 32:407.

- 27 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Abī Ḥatīm [Ibn Abī Ḥatīm], *Taqdīm al-maʿrifā li-kitāb al-jarḥ wa-l-taʿdīl* (Hyderabad: Maṭbaʿat Majlis Dāʾirat al-Maʾārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1952), 263.

- 28 al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 1:275.

- 29 Zakariyyā b. ʿAdī b. Ruzayq b. Ismāʿīl Abū Yaḥyā l-Kūfī (d. 211/826), who lived in Baghdad was a student of Ibn al-Mubārak and al-Fazārī. His students included al-Bukhārī (in works other than his *Ṣaḥīḥ*), ʿAbdallāh al-Dārimī, and ʿAbdallāh b. Abī Shayba. See Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 2:483–484.

- 30 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Riḥla fi ṭalab al-ḥadīth*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn ʿAtr (N.p.: N.p., 1975).

narrated from and studied with a range of scholars that indicates that he had access to a network of scholars from a diverse geographic range. There are also numerous reports, with slight variations in wording, that when Ibn al-Mubārak was asked how long he would continue to pursue knowledge, he replied, “until I no longer find a word from which I may derive benefit.”³¹ In another variant he replied, “I hope that you will see me in its course [i.e., on this path] until I die.”³² The combination of these descriptions seems to verify that he was not only an extensive traveler who met a range of contemporary scholars, but that he was also an erudite scholar in his own right.

Ibn al-Mubārak’s extensive travels not only gave him access to many prominent scholars during this formative period of Sunnī Islam, but also meant that he had many students from a vast geographic span. Interestingly, biographical dictionaries mention several names of individuals who were both teachers and students of Ibn al-Mubārak. Since knowledge was transmitted in the form of *ḥadīth* in the early period, this seems to indicate an exchange of information in which Ibn al-Mubārak transmitted *ḥadīth* to many individuals and also took *ḥadīths* which he did not have from many of these same individuals.

‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak had a particularly close relationship with Sufyān al-Thawrī (97–161/715–778) and Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyād (107–187/725–802). Sufyān al-Thawrī was twenty-one years his senior, and was his teacher. Ibn al-Mubārak’s numerous references to Sufyān al-Thawrī seem to indicate that he had a unique reverence for this scholar in particular. Al-Dhahabī narrates in his *Sīyar* that ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak said, “I recorded [knowledge] from one thousand and one hundred scholars, not a single one of which was superior to Sufyān al-Thawrī.”³³ The number in this statement appears to refer to a large number of scholars rather than a specific number. He is also reported as saying, “I sat with Sufyān al-Thawrī and after he spoke I said, there is nothing of his knowledge left except that I have heard it. Then I sat with him in another gathering and after he spoke I said, ‘I have not [yet] heard anything from his knowledge.’”³⁴

According to the sources, the respect between Sufyān al-Thawrī and Ibn al-Mubārak was mutual, as there are similar references in the sources in which Sufyān mentions his esteem for Ibn al-Mubārak. One report cites that a man came to Sufyān al-Thawrī to ask about a matter. Sufyān then asked him:

31 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, 32:408.

32 Ibid., 32:409.

33 Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Sīyar a‘lām al-nubalā*, ed. Muṣṭafa ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā, 17 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2004), 6:134.

34 Aḥmad b. ‘Abdallāh Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’ wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyā*, 10 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1967), 7:73.

“Where are you from?”

He replied, “From the people of the East.”

He said, “Do you not have [over there] the most knowledgeable of the people of the East?”

He asked, “And whom would that be, O Abū ʿAbdallāh?”

He said, “ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak.”

He said, “And he is the most learned of the people of the East?”

He replied, “And the people of the West.”³⁵

In another report ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Jumayl said: “We were near Ibn al-Mubārak in Mecca and so we said to him, ‘O scholar of the East, speak to us!’ Sufyān was nearby and he heard and said, ‘Beware (*wayḥakum*)! [He is] the scholar of the East and the West and whatever is in between them.”³⁶

In addition to Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ibn al-Mubārak was also compared to other prominent scholars; this reveals his own level of prominence among scholarly circles. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī is recorded to have said: “The Imams are four: Sufyān al-Thawrī, Mālik b. Anas, Ḥammād b. Zayd, and Ibn al-Mubārak.”³⁷ Another narration cites:

I heard ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī say—when he came to Baghdad to sell his house—and the people of *ḥadīth* gathered around him and said to him: “You sat with Sufyān al-Thawrī and heard [*ḥadīth*] from him and you heard [*ḥadīth*] from ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak. Which of the two is to be preferred?” He said: “ʿAbdallāh.” Would you not say that if Sufyān exerted great efforts to be like ʿAbdallāh for one day, he could not?³⁸

Finally another similar report attributed to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī relates:

Nuʿaym b. Ḥammād said: “I said to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī, which of the two is superior, ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak or Sufyān al-Thawrī?”

He said, “Ibn al-Mubārak.”

I said, “People differ with you.”

He said, “People do not have experience. I have not seen the likes of Ibn al-Mubārak.”³⁹

35 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 10:162.

36 Ibid.

37 Yūsuf b. Zakī b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmāʾ al-rijāl*, ed. Bashshār ʿAwwad Maʿrūf, 35 vols. (Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Risāla, 1980), 16:14.

38 Ibid., 16:14–15.

39 Ibid., 16:15.

Thus the multiple reports comparing Ibn al-Mubārak and Sufyān, and those indicating their mutual praise of each other seem to indicate that there was a close and complex relationship between the two figures. On one hand, Sufyān is a narrator from whom Ibn al-Mubārak took *ḥadīth* and with whom he studied. On the other hand, Sufyān revered the younger Ibn al-Mubārak so much that he is reported to have emulated his character and was also compared to him by their contemporaries. It is not possible to verify the accuracy of these quotes, but they nevertheless indicate a significant bond between the two figures.

It appears that Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyāḍ is another figure who had a close association with Ibn al-Mubārak. While also Ibn al-Mubārak’s senior, it appears that the two had several traits in common. Both were associated with piety and asceticism, participated in *jihād* on the frontiers (*thughūr*), were raised in Khurasān, were *ḥadīth* transmitters, and were students of Sufyān al-Thawrī. A report similar to the one mentioned earlier indicates that Sufyān al-Thawrī and Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyāḍ spent time together in Mecca near the Ka’ba. When Ibn al-Mubārak approached them, Sufyān said: “This is a man of the people of the East!” Fuḍayl then added, “This is a man of the people of the East and the West and all that is between them!”⁴⁰ Another report states that Ibn al-Mubārak was present in one of Fuḍayl’s gatherings. He then stood up and kissed Fuḍayl on the forehead and is reported to have said, “O teacher of goodness, who is more deserving of this than you.”⁴¹

Ibn al-Mubārak’s Recording of *Ḥadīths* through Writing

The role of writing in the transmission of *ḥadīth* has been an important subject of research for modern scholars. Gregor Schoeler has made important contributions to the discussions regarding the written and the oral transmission of Islamic texts in the first two centuries of Islam.⁴² Schoeler convincingly argues that in the early period, Islamic texts were still not codified and that written works were used mainly as notes to facilitate the oral transmission of knowledge in the form of lectures. He writes that the variant recensions of texts such as the *Muwaṭṭa’* indicate that texts were presented as lecture notes and there

40 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 10:162.

41 Abū Nu’aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’*, 8:92.

42 Gregor Schoeler, James E. Montgomery, and Uwe Vagelpohl, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam* (London: Routledge, 2006); and Gregor Schoeler and Shawkat M. Toorawa, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

were variations in content.⁴³ Schoeler also highlights the tensions between proponents of written transmission and those who favored oral transmission in the period preceding the *taṣnīf* movements in the late second/eighth and third/ninth century, when fields became systematized along with their texts. The second/eighth century is commonly characterized as a period in which scholars debated about the merits of writing *ḥadīths*. Some scholars viewed it as a means to ensure the accurate recording of *ḥadīths* while others were concerned about the negative impact it might have on the oral tradition, which preserved the context of these written texts through important pedagogical relationships during their human transmission.

Ibn al-Mubārak lived during a period when the writing of *ḥadīths* by scholars versus relying solely on one's memory was a matter of contention. There are numerous reports which suggest that Ibn al-Mubārak distinguished himself from many scholars of the first century by promoting the writing of *ḥadīth*. He is reported to have said, "The stain of ink on clothes is the trademark of scholars."⁴⁴ Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal is reported to have said, "Ibn al-Mubārak used to narrate from books, and whoever narrates from books will rarely have many errors. Wakī' used to narrate from his memory and as a result he has errors. And how much can a man commit to memory anyway?"⁴⁵ He also used his books as references; al-Sindī b. Abī Hārūn is reported to have said: "I used to go with Ibn al-Mubārak to the scholars and I once said to him (once there were none left alive), O Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, now who are we going to benefit from?" He said, "From our books."⁴⁶ Ibn al-Mubārak was

43 Schoeler writes in regard to the *Muwattaʿa*, "Of Malik ibn Anas we hear that he preferred to have his *Kitāb al-muwattaʿa* (The Book of the Well Trodden [Path]) read to him by his students (i.e. transmitted via *qirāʾah*). Sometimes he recited it himself...Occasionally, he is even reported to have issued a copy revised by himself for transmission (this technique is known as *munāwalah*). This means that he undoubtedly produced written versions or had them written out by scribes. Nevertheless, he did not give the *Muwattaʿa* a final shape; he did not establish a 'canonical' version on which the various recensions which have reached us could have been based. In fact, they document various lecture courses by *samāʿ* or *qirāʾah* held over different periods of time and show a high degree of variation." See Schoeler, *Oral and the Written*, 33. Umar F. Abd-Allah Wymann-Landgraf similarly writes, "His *Muwattaʿa* has dozens of different versions. He reportedly authorized at least seventy-three recensions: seventeen of them Medinese, two Meccan, ten Egyptian, twenty-seven Iraqi, thirteen Andalusian, and four North African." Wymann-Landgraf, *Mālik and Medina*, 60–61.

44 al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, 6:503.

45 Ibid.

46 Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, 8:156.

also reportedly asked, “How much do you intend to write?” He responded, “Perhaps there is a word of benefit which I have not written before.”⁴⁷

These references indicate Ibn al-Mubārak’s resolve to keep written records to facilitate his scholarship. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal’s statement above also seems to indicate that a probable reason for Ibn al-Mubārak’s ability to retain vast quantities of information in the forms of *ḥadīths* was due to his use of writing, which enabled him to review what he had heard, at a time when many of his contemporaries shunned the reliance on books. Al-Dhahabī writes, “He was a reliable transmitter. The books which he transmitted his *ḥadīths* from contained around twenty thousand *ḥadīths*.”⁴⁸ This statement explicitly indicates that Ibn al-Mubārak used books to retain and transmit traditions. In another statement his penchant for writing is noted in addition to the diverse and extensive number of scholars of his time he met with. Ibn al-Mubārak is quoted as having said, “I took knowledge from four thousand scholars and I narrated from a thousand.”⁴⁹ While the actual number is not necessarily accurate or even significant to the historian, the collection of these statements indicates that he did rely on writing, that this played a role in his accuracy as a transmitter, and improved his ability to retain vast amounts of information, such that he was able to supersede many of his contemporaries.

Another interesting anecdote reports that Ibn al-Mubārak did not limit himself to recording *ḥadīths*; he seems to have recorded other material he deemed important or useful. Al-Munawī writes that when one of Ibn al-Mubārak’s sons died, a Zoroastrian (*majūsī*) came to give his condolences. It is reported that this visitor then told Ibn al-Mubārak, “The intelligent one must do today what the ignorant one will do after a week has passed [i.e., he should remain patient].” Upon hearing this, Ibn al-Mubārak is reported to have ordered those around him, “Write this down!”⁵⁰

Ibn al-Mubārak the Merchant

Evidence from the classical sources indicates that Ibn al-Mubārak differed from many ascetics and pious figures during his time by virtue of his wealth

47 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, 32:408.

48 al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 1:267.

49 Ibid.

50 ‘Abd al-Ra‘ūf b. Tāj al-‘Ārifīn al-Munawī, *Fayḍ al-qadīr: sharḥ al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaghīr min aḥādīth al-bashīr al-nadhīr*, ed. Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Salām, 6 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2006), 3:230.

and active participation in trade and business. References to Ibn al-Mubārak's trade and views on wealth also reveal his attitude toward the ownership of material goods and his understanding of *zuhd*, as I discuss in depth below. In *Shadharāt al-dhahab* it is suggested that he learned his tradesmanship from his father, who later became a merchant, and from his famous teacher Abū Ḥanīfa, who also happened to be a businessman.

Several anecdotes in the biographical dictionaries indicate his financial success and wealth. Al-Khaṭīb relates that the son of Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ, ʿAlī b. Fuḍayl said:

I heard my father say to Ibn al-Mubārak, "You command us to be ascetic, content with little and spend on others, but we see that you come with possessions (merchandise), so how is that?"

He said, "O Abū ʿAlī, I only do that to protect my face, my honor, and I use it to aid me in obedience to my Lord."

He said, "O Ibn al-Mubārak, and what can be better than that when it is fulfilled?"⁵¹

Another anecdote not only portrays the way he funded the pilgrimage for others, but even more importantly, depicts his access to wealth. Al-Khaṭīb reports:

Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Ḥasan al-Shaḥīq said: "I heard my father say, 'When the time for hajj came, the companions of Ibn al-Mubārak from Marv would gather around him and say, 'Let us accompany you.' He would then say, 'Bring your money' and he would take it and put it in a box, locking it safely. Then he would set off with them from Marv to Baghdad and he would not cease spending on them and giving them the best foods and sweet dishes. Then they would leave Baghdad with the best clothes and [a good] appearance until they would reach the city of the Prophet where he would say to each one of them, 'What have your families asked that you purchase for them from the bounties of Medina?' They would say such and such a thing (and he would purchase it for them). Then they would leave for Mecca and when they would fulfill their duties he would say to each of them, 'What have your families asked that you purchase for them from the delights of Mecca?' They would say such and such a thing, and he would buy it for them. They would then leave Mecca and he did not stop spending on them until they reached Marv where he would decorate their homes and doors. After three days he would hold a feast for them and clothe them until they ate and became delighted, then he

51 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghḍādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 10:160.

would call for the box. He would then open it and return to every man his wealth, each with his name on it.⁵²

Ibn al-Mubārak viewed wealth as a means to facilitate piety rather than an obstacle to it as many of the ascetics of his time used to believe. In his perspective, poverty that leads to dependency and debt serves as a deterrent from worshipping God and living a virtuous life. He also viewed wealth as a means to support scholarship and learning; it could provide an income for those who dedicated their time to study.⁵³ One report states that Ibn al-Mubārak once told Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ, “Were it not for the likes of you and your companions I would not have done business.”⁵⁴ There also appears to have been some criticism regarding his spending wealth on scholars and students outside his hometown, to which he responded:

Indeed, I know the rank of those who possess virtue and sincerity. They sought knowledge of *ḥadīth* and did so due to the need of people for that [knowledge]. So if we abandon them, then their knowledge will be lost and if we aid them, they spread the knowledge of the nation of Muḥammad. I do not know of anything after prophethood more virtuous than knowledge.⁵⁵

In several sources it is reported that he paid off the debts of those in need. Al-Khaṭīb reports that Ibn al-Mubārak used to travel to the city of Tarsus and would stay at a particular rest area during his visit. Whenever he was in town, a certain young man would assist him and listen to *ḥadīth* from him. One day, when he came to Tarsus, this man did not come to see him. When Ibn al-Mubārak asked about his whereabouts, he was told that the man had been jailed for being ten thousand dirhams in debt. It is reported that Ibn al-Mubārak paid off the man’s debt and asked that this act be kept confidential. When the man returned from jail, Ibn al-Mubārak asked him where he had been. He said, he was jailed for not paying his debts but was later saved by a

52 Ibid., 10:158.

53 Peter Brown discusses a similar trend among many pious Christian figures in the fifth century CE, in that they felt that wealth used prudently could strengthen Christian faith communities. Brown writes, “Rather than denouncing the evil origins of wealth and insisting on its total renunciation, these writers [of the fifth century], came to emphasize how wealth could be used to consolidate the [Christian] community.” See Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–550 AD* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 530.

54 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 10:158.

55 Ibid., 10:160.

young man whose identity he did not know. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī writes that the man did not learn of Ibn al-Mubārak's favor until after the latter's death.⁵⁶

A similar report states that, "Ibn al-Mubārak sent four thousand dirhams to a man by the name of Abū Bakr b. ʿAyyāsh and said to him, 'Use this to divert from yourself the temptation (*fitna*) of your people.'" The choice of words here is interesting; it reveals that Ibn al-Mubārak regarded indebtedness as a *fitna*, or a source of trial for people. This word is also used to denote trials or tribulations to one's faith or the faith of an entire community. Thus the anecdotes in the biographical accounts suggest that Ibn al-Mubārak believed that wealth and property could have a positive impact and help preserve the faith and practice of the community and the individuals therein, when it was disposed of appropriately. As the first to write about *zuhd*, or abstaining from the world, his perspective differed from those who advocated complete abstention from the world and more austere forms of asceticism.

Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ and Ibn Kathīr related an incident in which Ibn al-Mubārak was traveling for the pilgrimage. On his route to Mecca ʿAbdallāh entered Kufa and saw a young woman plucking a dead duck. Since it is not permissible to consume dead meat he asked her if it had been slaughtered. She replied that it had not. He said, "Then why are you plucking it?" She replied, "So that my family and I can eat it." He informed her that it was not permissible to do so and so she said, "My brother and I have only one piece of clothing. We have no food except what we find thrown in the dumps. Carrion has become permissible for us to consume for a number of days now. Our father was a rich man; his wealth was confiscated unjustly and he was killed." He asked regarding her family's whereabouts and she informed him. He hired a man to take him there and when he found the house, he released his riding animal and gave it to the household along with all the goods that were on it. He handed over most of the money he had to the young woman, and kept only what was sufficient for his journey back to his land, Marv. He gave his provisions to the impoverished family saying, "This is better for us than our [supererogatory] pilgrimage this year."⁵⁷

56 Ibid., 10:159.

57 Ibn ʿIyāḍ al-Sabtī, *Tartīb al-madārik wa-taqrīb al-masālik li-maʿrifat aʿlām madhhab Mālik*, ed. Aḥmad Bakīr Maḥmūd, 5 vols. (Beirut: Maktab al-Ḥayā, 1967), 3:43–45. Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya fī l-tārīkh*, 14 vols. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Saʿāda, 1932), 10:178.

Ibn al-Mubārak's *Fiqh*

Although the biographical sources consistently mention that in addition to being a *muḥaddith* Ibn al-Mubārak was also scholar of jurisprudence, far less information is available regarding this aspect of his career and we have virtually no information about his legal methodology. This may be due to two factors. First, Ibn al-Mubārak's school of law, if indeed his legal thought can be distinguished as an independent school of law, has not survived and as a result was never developed and preserved in the way other schools of law were. Second, the references which refer to him as a jurist (*faqīh*) or mention his expertise in jurisprudence (*fiqh*) do not clearly indicate whether his legal positions and reasoning were independent from those of his prominent teachers such as Abū Ḥanīfa, al-Awzā'ī, and Mālik b. Anas, or if he simply incorporated and/or preserved the developments in the field of Islamic law during his time.

In his *Fihrist*, Ibn al-Nadīm lists Ibn al-Mubārak as both a *ḥadīth* transmitter and a scholar of *fiqh*. Numerous other sources that cite Ibn al-Mubārak mention his prominent role in the field of *fiqh*. Ibn Ḥajar mentions that “Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak is a sound and reliable [transmitter], and a *faqīh*.”⁵⁸ Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna said, “He was [a man of] jurisprudence and knowledge (*kāna faqīhan ‘āliman*).”⁵⁹ Ibn Kathīr stated, “He was distinguished by his memory and jurisprudence (*kāna mawṣūfan bi-l-ḥifẓ wa-l-fiqh*).”⁶⁰ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī states, “The *imāms* are four: Sufyān al-Thawrī, Mālik b. Anas, Ḥammād b. Zayd,⁶¹ and Ibn al-Mubārak.”⁶² In addition, Ibn Ma‘īn states that Muḥammad b. al-Mu‘tamar b. Sulaymān said: “I said to my father: O father, who is the *faqīh* of the Arabs?” He said: ‘Sufyān al-Thawrī.’ When Sufyān died I said: ‘O father, who is the *faqīh* of the Arabs?’ He said: “Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak.”⁶³ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī cites Ibrāhīm b. Shamās as saying:

58 Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Taqrīb al-tahdhīb*, 2 vols. (Medina: Maktabat al-‘Ilmiyya, 1960), 1:445.

59 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 5:385.

60 Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, 10:177.

61 Ḥammād b. Zayd b. Dirham al-Azdi l-Jahḍamī, Abū Ismā‘īl al-Baṣrī l-Azraq (d. 179/795) was one of Ibn al-Mubārak's teachers. He was known for his reliability as a transmitter and as an expert in *ḥadīths* related to the *sīra*. He was also known to be a writer of *ḥadīths* at a time when it was still not common. Ibn Ḥajar cites the quote above, attributed to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī in the following way which replaces Ibn al-Mubārak with al-Awzā'ī, “The *imāms* of the people during their time are four: Sufyān al-Thawrī in Kufa, Mālik in the Hijaz, al-Awzā'ī in greater Syria, and Ḥammād b. Zayd in Basra.” Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 2:195–197.

62 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 10:160.

63 Cf. Ibn Abī Ḥatīm, *Taqdīm al-ma‘rifā*, 262 and Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’*, 8:163. As

I have seen the person most skilled in jurisprudence (*afqah al-nās*), and the most cautious and abstentious person (*awraʿ al-nās*), and the person with the keenest memory (*ahfaz al-nās*). As for the person most skilled in jurisprudence, it is ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak. As for the most cautious person, it is Fuḍayl b. ʿIyād. As for the one with the keenest memory, it is Wakiʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ.⁶⁴

Ibn al-Mubārak was a student of Mālik b. Anas for a period of his career. Ibn Farḥūn includes an entry on Ibn al-Mubārak in his famous compendium on the Mālikī legal school, *Kitāb al-Dibāj al-mudhahhab*, where he includes him in the “first generations of the companions of Mālik coming from the East.”⁶⁵ Ibn Farḥūn’s entry is noteworthy, since Ibn al-Mubārak is not depicted in the vast array of non-Mālikī sources as having necessarily been an adherent of the Mālikī *madhhab*. There are, however, numerous references to meetings between Ibn al-Mubārak and Mālik and these indicate that Ibn al-Mubārak regarded Mālik highly and transmitted the *ḥadīth* in the *Muwattaʿa*. Considering the vast number of scholars Ibn al-Mubārak met with, his meeting with Mālik would not seem to sufficiently support Ibn al-Mubārak’s adherence to Mālik’s legal school. In fact, biographical sources indicate that Ibn al-Mubārak appears to have had the closest interaction with Abū Ḥanīfa, and may have even been a follower of the Ḥanafī *madhhab* at its earliest stages. The Ḥanafīs also include Ibn al-Mubārak in their compendium of Ḥanafī scholars. The eagerness and competition of different schools of law to include him as an adherent of their *madhhab* seems to be further evidence of Ibn al-Mubārak’s stature as a scholar.

In his entry, Ibn Farḥūn mentions that Ibn al-Mubārak both transmitted *ḥadīth* and learned *fiqh* with Mālik b. Anas (*wa-tafaqqaha bi-Mālik*).⁶⁶ Other

mentioned earlier, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī is cited as stating that he preferred Ibn al-Mubārak to Sufyān al-Thawrī as a scholar. While we do not know which scholar was more prominent, the fact that Ibn al-Mubārak was commonly compared to such foundational figures of Sunnī *ḥadīth* scholars is clearly a reflection of his esteemed position in this scholarly circle.

- 64 Wakiʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ b. Malīḥ al-Ruʿāsī, Abū Sufyān al-Kūfī l-Ḥāfiẓ (d. 197/812) was known for having relied on his memory to transmit numerous *ḥadīths*. See Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 6:720–726; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 10:164.
- 65 After a biographical account of Mālik b. Anas’ life, Ibn Farḥūn divides the rest of the compendium of Mālikī scholars into generations (*ṭabaqāt*). He further divides each category of generations of scholars by their geographic origin. It is significant that Ibn Farḥūn includes Ibn al-Mubārak as a scholar of the Mālikī tradition and a first generation student of Mālik.
- 66 Ibrāhīm b. ʿAlī b. Farḥūn, *Kitāb al-Dibāj al-mudhahhab fī maʿrifat aʿyān ʿulamāʾ al-madhhab*, ed. Muḥammad al-Aḥmadī Abū l-Nūr, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth li-Ṭabaʾa wa-l-Nashr, 1975), 1:407.

sources note that Mālik b. Anas and Ibn al-Mubārak each admired the piety and scholarship of the other.

Ibn al-Mubārak praised Mālik for his forbearance and the reverence with which he narrated prophetic traditions; he related the following anecdote:

I was once in the presence of Mālik and a scorpion stung him sixteen times. His color changed and he remained patient, but he did not interrupt his narration of *ḥadīth*. When he finished I asked him [about this] and he said, "I am patient out of reverence for the words of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him."⁶⁷

Similarly, Ibn Ḥajar mentions that when Ibn al-Mubārak would enter the gatherings of Mālik b. Anas, Mālik would make space for him to sit beside him and he showed him great deference. Considering Mālik's reputation as a scholar who inspired the awe and reverence of his pupils, Mālik's exceptional treatment of Ibn al-Mubārak reveals his unique appreciation for this scholar from Khurasān. Ibn Ḥajar relates:

We were in a gathering with Mālik. Ibn al-Mubārak sought permission to attend the gathering and permission was granted. We saw that Mālik moved to make space for him in his gathering, and then he made him sit right next to him. And I have never seen him make space in his gathering for anyone other than him (Ibn al-Mubārak). The reader used to read to Mālik. When he would come across a matter Mālik would ask him (Ibn al-Mubārak), "What is your view on this?" And 'Abdallāh used to answer in a low tone. Then he stood up and left and Mālik was astonished by his courtesy. Then he said to us, "This Ibn al-Mubārak is the *faqīh* of Khurasān."⁶⁸

While we cannot establish the accuracy of these reports, they do reflect a general theme of Mālik's importance and influence for Ibn al-Mubārak.

As noted, Sufyān al-Thawrī was another prominent scholar of *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* with whom Ibn al-Mubārak studied and whom he considered one of his teachers. Though the Thawrī school of law never flourished as the other legal schools did, Sufyān al-Thawrī was nevertheless a pivotal figure in the development of the early Sunnī branches of Islamic sciences. Several sources cite Ibn al-Mubārak's praise of Sufyān al-Thawrī. Al-Dhahabī quotes Ibn al-Mubārak as saying, "There is no one on the face of this earth more learned than

67 al-Munāwī, *Fayḍ al-qadīr*, 3:253.

68 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 5:386.

Sufyān.”⁶⁹ He also said of Sufyān, “Whenever I was unclear about a matter I used to come to Sufyān and he was like an ocean [of knowledge] and no one has been praised, except that I found him unworthy of it, except Sufyān.”⁷⁰ Ibn al-Mubārak is also quoted as describing the vastness of Sufyān al-Thawrī’s learning and piety by saying, “If I wished, I could find Sufyān praying. If I wished I could find him transmitting *ḥadīth*. If I wished I could find him immersed in *fiqh*.”⁷¹ When Ibn al-Mubārak was asked who are the leaders (*imāms*) of the people he said, “Sufyān and those like him.”⁷²

Ibn al-Mubārak also appears to have been significantly influenced by Abū Ḥanīfa. Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī wrote, “The most important leaders in Islamic jurisprudence (*aʿimmat al-mujtahidīn*) and most prominent scholars were [Abū Ḥanīfa’s] students, such as the great imām upon whose greatness and uprightness, prominence, and piety the Muslim community has a consensus.”⁷³ Of all the scholars Ibn al-Mubārak praised, we find more quotes about Abū Ḥanīfa in non-Ḥanafī based sources than about any other legal scholar. Ibn al-Mubārak may in fact have been a follower of Abū Ḥanīfa’s school of law; at the least, his legal reasoning was heavily influenced by Ḥanafī methodology. The following anecdote is attributed to Ibn al-Mubārak during his period of study under the tutelage of al-Awzāʿī in greater Syria:

The elderly scholar asked Ibn al-Mubārak, “O Khurasānī, who is this man who came out of Kufa?” referring to Abū Ḥanīfa with skepticism. Ibn al-Mubārak then went to his residence and gathered a number of Abū Ḥanīfa’s legal issues for al-Awzāʿī to examine. When asked who the author was, Ibn al-Mubārak told his teacher it was Nuʿmān b. Thābit. Ibn al-Mubārak persisted in doing this for three days. After being impressed by the legal work that was presented to him, al-Awzāʿī told Ibn al-Mubārak, “he [the author] is an elite of the scholars, go and acquire knowledge from him (*ḥādhā nabīl min al-mashayikh idhhab fa-istakthir minhu*).” Ibn al-

69 al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 1:191.

70 Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdimat al-maʿrifā*, 57.

71 Abū Zakariyyā Yahyā b. Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmāʾ wa-l-lughāt*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1977), 1:223.

72 Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, 8:168.

73 “Wa talmadha lahu kibār min al-mashāyikh al-aʿimma al-mujtahidīn wa-l-ʿulamāʾ al-rāsikhīn ka-l-imām al-jalīl al-majmaʿ ʿalā jalālatihi wa-barāʾatihi wa-taqaddummihi wa-zuhdihi ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak.” Cf. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī, *al-Khayrāt al-ḥasan fī manāqib imām al-aʿzam Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nuʿmān*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAshiq Allāhi al-Barnī (Beirut: Dār al-Arqam, 1997), 16.

Mubārak then revealed that “This is Abū Ḥanifa, whom you forbade me from seeing.”⁷⁴

Interestingly, in Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal’s biography written by his son Ṣāliḥ, Ibn Ḥanbal is reported to have said that Fuḍayl b. ‘Yāḍ and ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak are two scholars with whom Ibn Ḥanbal wanted to study, but was unable to before their deaths.⁷⁵ The early history of the development of legal schools did not take place in isolation; rather it was a mutual exchange of ideas, just as this combination of anecdotes reflects relationships between scholars Islamic jurisprudence.

Ibn al-Mubārak’s Theology

Though Ibn al-Mubārak was not a theologian, numerous lines of poetry and quotes attributed to him reveal his views on the theological debates that were prevalent during his time. Ibn al-Mubārak first and foremost upheld the doctrine of the probity of all of the Companions of the Prophet. This position was one of the foundational theological principles of the proto-Sunnī network of *ḥadīth* scholars of which Ibn al-Mubārak was a critical figure. Qāḍī ‘Yāḍ quotes Ibn al-Mubārak as having said, “[There are] two traits if they are in a person, he is saved: truthfulness and love of the Companions of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him.”⁷⁶ Ibn Khallikān relates in his *Wafayāt al-a’yān* that Ibn al-Mubārak was asked:

Who is superior, Mu‘āwiya b. Abū Sufyān or ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz?” He replied, “By God, the dust which entered the nostrils of Mu‘āwiya while he was with the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, is superior to ‘Umar by a thousand times. Mu‘āwiya prayed behind the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, and when he said *sami‘ Allāhu liman ḥamida* he said *rabbanā wa-lakal ḥamd*. So what is there after this?”⁷⁷

74 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, 32:400–401.

75 See Ṣāliḥ b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Sīrat al-imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, ed. Fu‘ād ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Aḥmad (Alexandria: Mu‘assasat Shabāb al-Jam‘iyya, 1981).

76 ‘Yāḍ b. Mūsā, *al-Shifā’ bi-ta’rīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā*, ed. Muḥammad Bajāwī (Cairo: Maṭba‘at ‘Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1977), 2:43.

77 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a’yān*, 2:238.

In another report, ‘Ubaydallāh b. Mūsā states, “We were with Abū Ḥamza al-Thamalī when Ibn al-Mubārak came [to record traditions]. Abū Ḥamza then mentioned a tradition about ‘Uthmān in which he censured him. Then Ibn al-Mubārak stood up and tore up everything he had written from him and left.”⁷⁸ A similar report indicates Ibn al-Mubārak’s position that the tradition of a *ḥadīth* transmitter who censures members of the early community of Muslims (*salaf*) must be abandoned. ‘Alī b. Shaqīq reportedly said, “I heard ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak say to the leaders of the people, ‘Abandon the *ḥadīth* of ‘Amr b. Thābit because he curses the early community.’” The following verses of poetry attributed to Ibn al-Mubārak reflect his position on the Companions of the Prophet:

أَضْحُوا تَابِعَهُمْ نُورًا وَبَرَهُنَا	حُبُّ النَّبِيِّ وَحُبُّ الصَّحْبِ مَفْتَرُضٌ
فَلَا يَقُولَنَّ فِي الصَّدِيقِ بَهْتَانَا	مَنْ كَانَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ خَالِقَهُ
وَلَا الْخَلِيفَةَ عُثْمَانَ بْنَ عَفَانَا	وَلَا يَسِبُ أَبَا حَفْصٍ وَشِيعَتَهُ
هَمُّ الذَّنْبِ بَنُو اللَّيْلِ أَرْكَانَا	ثُمَّ الْوَلِيُّ فَلَا يَنْسَى الْمَقَالَ لَهُ
جَارَاهُمُ اللَّهُ بِالْإِحْسَانِ إِحْسَانَا	هُمْ عِمَادُ الْوَرَى فِي النَّاسِ كُلِّهِمْ

Love of the Prophet and love of his Companions is obligatory
 Light and guidance appear to those who follow them
 He who knows that God is his Creator
 Will not slander *al-Ṣiddīq*
 Nor will he curse Abū Ḥafṣa and his followers
 Nor the Caliph ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān
 Then the *Walī*, his statements should not be forgotten
 They are the ones who built pillars for the faith
 They are the best men of all humanity
 May God reward their virtue with virtue.

The references in the poem reflect the disagreements among the members of the early Muslim community regarding the leadership of the Muslims after the Prophet’s death. In addition, the poem begins by alluding to the principle of the probity of the Companions, a principle that was upheld by the proto-Sunnī *ḥadīth* circles of his time. Ibn al-Mubārak not only praises the first three caliphs but he also uses the term *walī* to praise ‘Alī; thus he implies that the

78 al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-ʿitidāl* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 2009), 1:363.

Sunnīs agree with the Shī'ī position on the importance of 'Alī and further, that this does not contradict the general proto-Sunnī principle of the probity of the Companions or their support for the first three caliphs. Through this, he also rejects any anti-Shī'ī position that rejects the sanctity of 'Alī altogether.

Ibn al-Mubārak responded to some of the more extreme views held by the supporters of the fourth caliph 'Alī as well as the views of the proto-Mu'tazilī Jahmiyya in these lines of poetry:

إني امرؤ ليس لي في ديني لغامرة	لين ولست على الأسلاف طعانا
وفي ذنوبي إذا فكرت مشغل	وفي معادي إن لم ألق غفرانا
عن ذكر قوم مضوا كانوا لنا سلفا	وللنبي على الإسلام أعوانا
ولا أزال لهم مستغفرا أبدا	كما أمرت به سرا وإعلانا
فما الدخول عليهم في الذي عملوا	بالطعن مني وقد فرطت عصيانا
فلا أسب أبابكر ولا عمرا	ولا أسب - معاذ الله - عثمانا
ولا ابن عمر رسول الله أشتمه	حتى ألبس تحت التراب أكفانا
ولا الزبير حواري الرسول ولا	أهدي لطلحة شتاء عز أو هانا
ولا أقول لأهل المؤمنين كما	قال الغواة لها زورا وبهتانا
ولا أقول علي في السحاب لقد	والله قلت إذا جورا وعدوانا
لو كان في المزن ألقته وما حملت	مرز السحاب من الأحياء أنسانا
إني أحب عليا حب مقتصد	ولا أرى دونه في الفضل عثمانا
أما علي فقد كانت له قدم	في السابقين لها في الناس قد بانا
وكان عثمان ذا صدق وذاورع	مراقبا وجزاه الله غفرانا
ما يعلم الله من قلبي مشايعة	للبغضين عليا وابن عقانا
إني لأمنهم بغضي علانية	ولست أكنهم في الصدر كتماننا
ولا أرى حرمة يوم المبتدع	وهنا يكون له مني وأوهانا

ولا أقول بقول الجهم إن له	قولا يضارع أهل الشك أحيانا
ولا أقول تخلى عن خليفته	ربّ العباد وولي الأمر شيطانا
ما قال فرعون هذا في تجربته لكن	فرعون موسى ولا هاما ن طغيانا
على ملة الإسلام ليس لنا	اسم سواه بذلك الله سمنا
إن الجماعة جبل الله فاعتصموا	بها هي العروة الوثقى لمن دانا
الله يدفع بالسلطان معضلة	عن ديننا رحمة منه ورضوانا
لولا الأئمة لم يأمن لنا سبل	وكان أضعفنا نهبالا قوانا

I am a man who possesses no shortcoming in my faith
 [I am] moderate and not a critic of the early Muslims
 If I ponder my sins I become overwhelmed
 And upon my end if I do not find forgiveness
 In the [way that] people of the past who preceded us are remembered
 And who were supporters to the Prophet of Islam
 I will not stop asking forgiveness for them always
 As I was ordered to do both in public and in private
 Nor do I approach what they have done
 With blame I would have otherwise transgressed into sinfulness
 I do not curse Abū Bakr or ‘Umar
 Nor do I curse—God forbid—‘Uthmān
 Nor will I curse the cousin of the Messenger of God
 Until I wear my funeral shroud under the earth
 Nor Zubayr the follower of the Messenger of God
 Nor will I insult Ṭalḥa, glorify, or disparage [him]
 Nor will I say about the mother of the believers
 [what] the slanderers have said falsely and with defamation
 Nor do I say that ‘Alī is in the clouds verily
 By God I will have done so in transgression and injustice
 Had he been in the rain filled cloud it would have hurled him
 The clouds of the sky [do not] retain from the living a human
 I love ‘Alī with a love of moderation
 Nor do I prefer him to ‘Uthmān
 As for ‘Alī, he certainly had seniority
 Among the first Muslims as this is obvious among people
 ‘Uthmān was trustworthy and pious

And vigilant [in observing God's laws] and God rewarded him with
 forgiveness
 My heart knows no sympathy toward
 Those who possess anger toward 'Alī and Ibn 'Affān
 I publicly proclaim my anger toward them
 I do not keep it in my heart a secret
 Nor do I see sanctity for a single day for an innovator
 They [are the ones] to whom there is criticism and humiliation
 Nor do I say the words of Jahm for he has
 Words that sometimes even the people of doubt do not approach
 Nor do I say he is detached from his creation
 He is the Lord of creation and the leader in action [which they follow]
 is Satan
 Pharaoh did not say this by his being forced or else
 Pharaoh would have been Moses and Hāmān not a transgressor
 The nation of Islam has no other name
 For this is the name which God has given us
 The group (*jamā'a*) is the rope of God, so hold to it firmly
 For it is the firmest handhold for those who are humble
 God fends off with power ambiguities
 About our religion by His mercy and pleasure with us
 Were it not for the *imāms*, our path would not be secured for us
 And the weak among us would abuse the strong.

Ibn al-Mubārak begins these lines of poetry by once again affirming his belief in the trustworthiness of all of the Prophet's Companions. He refers to 'Alī as the "cousin of the Messenger of God," to emphasize the blood ties between the two and as a means of emphasizing his honored status. Ibn al-Mubārak refers to what the Sunnīs believed were the extreme Shī'a or *ghulāt* by alluding to the belief that 'Alī is in the clouds. Al-Ash'arī writes in his *Maqālāt al-islam-īyyīn* that there was a group among the *ghulāt* who held this belief and that when they would see the clouds moving they would greet 'Alī by greeting the clouds.⁷⁹ Here the author of the poem confirms his belief that some of the ideologies about 'Alī were extreme and rejects this particular group of extremists (*ghulāt*). Furthermore, by specifically mentioning 'Ā'isha, Ibn al-Zubayr, and Ṭalḥa, Ibn al-Mubārak advocated the Sunnī position of refraining from criticizing these individuals based on the events of the battle of the camel.⁸⁰

79 Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ismā'īl al-Ash'arī, *Kitāb Maqālāt al-Islamiyyīn wa-ikhtilāf al-muṣallīn*, ed. Helmut Ritter (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1963), 16.

80 Sean Anthony depicts some of the narratives of the introduction of some of the practices

“The words of Jahm” referred to in the poem are the views of pure determinism attributed to the Jabriyya who believed that humans did not have any freedom of choice in their actions. The Jahmiyya are what heresiographers such as al-Sharastānī considered to be the extreme Jabriyya.⁸¹ Jahm b. Ṣafwān and his followers believed that the attribution of freewill in human actions implies a limitation of the power of God. Hence, he advocated that all human actions, including evil acts, were determined by God and could not be controlled by the actor. This is what is meant when Ibn al-Mubārak continues to say that had this been the case, “Pharaoh would have been Moses and Hāmān not a tyrant.” If a person’s evil actions were predetermined by God, then one cannot blame the perpetrator of these actions. In this case, individuals who are censured for their disbelief and oppression such as Pharaoh and Hāmān would have to be absolved of blame since they could not control their actions. Furthermore, if this were the case then these characters would have to be considered on an equal standing with virtuous individuals such as Moses, since both are only acting in the way that was predetermined for them.

The reference to the *jamāʿa* here seems to imply what was known at this time as the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa*, which were the circles of *ḥadīth* transmitters and their followers. The verse here also alludes to the Qurʾānic verse *faṭaṣamū bi-ḥabli llāhi jamīʿan wa-lā tafarraqu*, which implies that holding on to this “rope” of the *jamāʿa* is a way to ensure that one’s creed and faith is not corrupted.⁸² The completion of this Qurʾānic verse also speaks of eternal pun-

of what became known as *ghuluww* or excessive practices of some of the Shīʿīs, such as cursing the Companions of the Prophet or attributing divinity to ʿAlī, to their introduction into Shīʿa by the infamous ʿAbdallāh b. al-Sabāʿ. The heresiographical literature on Ibn Sabāʿ had become predominant by the second/eighth century, the time of Ibn al-Mubārak. In examining these sources Anthony writes, “The cursing archetype credits Ibn al-Sabāʿ with the quintessentially Rāfiḍī practice of cursing (*ṭaʿn*) or insulting (*sabb*) the first two caliphs and the *ṣaḥāba*, a practice which earns Ibn Sabāʿ the ire of ʿAlī and in some versions, even results in his banishment to al-Madaʿīn.” Sean W. Anthony, *The Caliph and the Heretic: Ibn Sabaʿ and the Origins of Shīʿism* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 147.

81 Abū l-Fattāḥ Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*, ed. ʿAbd al-Azīz Muḥammad al-Wakīl, 3 vols. in 1 (Cairo: Muʾassasat al-Ḥalabī, 1968), 1:85–87.

82 Qurʾān, 3:103. The entire verse is, “And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you—when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers. And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make clear to you His verses that you may be guided.”

ishment that was averted after divergent groups came together, thus it implies that similar consequences may result from not following the *jamā'a*.

In al-Bukhārī's *Khalq al-af'āl wa-l-radd 'alā l-Jahmiyya wa-aṣḥāb al-ta'īl* we find another censure of the Jahmiyya; he cites Ibn al-Mubārak as saying:

We do not say as the Jahmiyya have said, that He [God] is here on earth. "Verily He is above his throne (*'alā l-'arshi istawa*)."

And it was said to him [Ibn al-Mubārak] "How do we know our Lord?"

He replied, "He is above the heavens on his throne."

He then said to one the men among them, "Do you believe yourself to be detached from Him?" And the one in front of him was made speechless.

And he said, "Who says that He with whom there is no other deity is created has disbelieved. We may speak the words of the Jews and the Christians but we can never speak the words of the Jahmiyya."⁸³

Ibn al Mubārak also has famous lines of poetry in which he derives the name of the Jahmiyya from the word *jahannam* or hell:

I am amazed at a devil [i.e., Jahm] who comes to the people

Inciting them to evil while his name is derived from *jahannam*⁸⁴

It is said that 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan Shaqīq asked Ibn al-Mubārak, "How should we believe in our Lord?" He replied, "By believing He is above the seven heavens and over His throne. We do not say as the Jahmiyya say that He is here on earth."⁸⁵

In a similar report, a man came to Ibn al-Mubārak and said, "O Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān, I fear God because of how much I curse the Jahmiyya." He said, "Do not fear because they claim that your God who is in the heavens is nothing."⁸⁶

Ibn al-Mubārak also referred to 'Amr b. 'Ubayd specifically when he wrote:

O seeker of knowledge,

Go to Ḥammād b. Zayd

Take knowledge with forbearance,

Then tie it down with a chain.

83 Muḥammad b. Ismā'il al-Bukhārī, *Khalq af'āl al-'ibād: al-radd 'alā al-jahmiyya wa-aṣḥāb al-ta'īl*, ed. Abū Hājar Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Basyūnī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1988), 10.

84 al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 6:255.

85 Ibid., 8:403.

86 Ibid.

And abandon innovation (*al-bid‘a*)
From the reports of ‘Amr b. ‘Ubayd

‘Amr b. ‘Ubayd (80–144/699–761) was reportedly one of the later students of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and one of the earliest figures to advocate *qadariyya* or a belief in freewill that is independent of God. He is even recorded in many sources as being one of the first people to articulate some of the earliest ideas of the later Mu‘tazili school. While many sources cite Wāṣil b. al-‘Aṭā’ as having been the figure who isolated himself (*i’tazala*) from the gathering of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, other sources cite this figure as being ‘Amr b. ‘Ubayd. There is also evidence that the two figures were related and held similar views about *qadar*. While we cannot gauge the accuracy of these reports, we know that Ibn al-Mubārak rejected both the Qadariyya and the Jabriyya; this is clear from his criticism of Jahm b. Ṣafwān and ‘Amr b. ‘Ubayd. Ibn al-Mubārak was an active proponent of the theological positions of the people of *ḥadīth*, those who referred to themselves as the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā‘a*. The series of theological debates and intellectual trends in this group of proto-Sunnīs and later Sunnīs eventually led to the development of the Ash‘arī theological school that reconciled freewill and determination through the concept of *kasb*. The Atharī theological school, another variant, emerged but was less prominent among the Sunnīs. In addition, the Māturidī school, with views closely akin to those of the Ash‘arīs, eventually gained prominence, particularly under their Ottoman patrons.

Notably, we see evidence in the sources that *ḥadīth* transmitters like Ibn al-Mubārak did not reject a transmitter’s tradition based solely on their belief in *qadar*. In another report, Ibn al-Mubārak was asked, “Why do you transmit reports from Sa‘īd and Hishām al-Dustuwā‘ī but you abandon the reports of ‘Amr b. ‘Ubayd even though they hold the same beliefs?” He said, “Because ‘Amr calls others to his disbelief while the other two remain silent.”⁸⁷ According to al-Dhahabī, Hishām al-Dustuwā‘ī “spoke of *qadar*,” but he was a trustworthy person whose *ḥadīths* were accepted as long as he did not transmit any *ḥadīths* which supported *qadar*. ‘Amr b. ‘Ubayd, on the other hand, was a controversial figure and an active proponent of his position. He was a full-fledged Qadarī whereas Hishām al-Dustuwā‘ī does not appear to have held views that were considered as extreme, despite differences that other scholars may have had with him on the matter of freewill.

In another report, Ibn al-Mubārak states, “I heard Sufyān al-Thawrī say, ‘The Qadariyya are disbelievers and the Jahmiyya are disbelievers.’ ‘Ammār

87 al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, ed. ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Salam al-Tadmurī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1990), 9:241.

b. ‘Abd al-Jabbār then asked, ‘And what is your view of them?’ He said, ‘My opinion is that of Sufyān.’”⁸⁸

Ibn al-Mubārak also took a stand against those who advocated that the Qur’ān was created. Al-Dhahabī states that Aḥmad b. ‘Abdallāh b. Yūnus reported that Ibn al-Mubārak, “... read a portion of the Qur’ān and then said, ‘whoever claims that this is created has disbelieved (*faqad kafar*) in God the Almighty.’”⁸⁹

Ibn al-Mubārak appears to have been a proponent of not interpreting the Qur’ānic verses that discuss God’s attributes in a manner that may constitute anthropomorphism. This theological perspective of “*bilā kayf*,” or accepting the Qur’ānic statements referring to God’s hand, face, etc. without questioning how was a common view among *ḥadīth* scholars. This was perhaps regarded as a compromise between the literalism that led to anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*) and the philosophic interpretations of the Mu‘tazilis.

There is also a report that indicates his views on the Murji’a. Al-Sha‘rānī reports that it was said to Ibn al-Mubārak:

“Shaybān accuses you of being a Murji’a.”

He said, “Shaybān has lied. I oppose the Murji’a in three matters: They claim that faith is only words and not deeds. I say it is words and deeds. They claim that the one who abandons prayer does not disbelieve but I say that he disbelieves. They claim that faith neither increases nor decreases but I say that it increases and it decreases.”⁹⁰

Classical sources portray Ibn al-Mubārak as a figure fiercely opposed to what was often referred to as innovations (*bid‘a*) in theological belief that appeared to become prevalent as part of the debates regarding the nature of God, the Qur’ān, freewill, and predetermination in the second/eighth century. Al-Shāṭibī writes that Ibn al-Mubārak once said:

You should know, my brother, that death is a blessing for every Muslim who meets God upon the *sunna*. Indeed to God do we belong and to Him do we return. Only to God do we complain of our loneliness, for indeed our brothers have gone, our supporters have decreased, and innovation appeared.⁹¹

88 Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’*, 7:28.

89 al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 1:279.

90 Abū l-Mawāhib ‘Abd al-Wahhāb b. Aḥmad b. ‘Alī l-Anṣārī l-Sha‘rānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ḥasan Maḥmūd (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1993), 60.

91 Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā l-Shāṭibī, *al-‘Itisām*, ed. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān

Finally, another report states that Ibn al-Mubārak heard that al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (165–243/781–857) ate some food with a known innovator and hence Ibn al-Mubārak said to him, “I am not going to speak to you for thirty days.”⁹² Ibn al-Mubārak’s reprimand of al Muḥāsibī implies a student-teacher relationship; this is noteworthy because it implies al-Muḥāsibī’s connection to the proto-Sunnī scholastic network Ibn al-Mubārak was a part of while he himself is the author of one of the most important texts on Sufism, *al-Risālat al-mustarshidīn*. If this report is accurate, it would indicate Ibn al-Mubārak’s influence on later leading Sufi luminaries.

While a skeptical approach inclines to view references such as the above as later fabrications, an examination of the critical role of chains of transmission (*isnād*), traveling to meet prominent contemporary scholars (*riḥla fi ṭalab al-ʿilm*), and the continuity of the generational structure of scholar to student transmission (*ṭabaqāt*) as evidenced in the voluminous corpus of classical texts indicate that the veracity of such reports is not unlikely. Later in the present work I revisit Ibn al-Mubārak’s role in leading and teaching many of the most prominent figures of early Sunnī Islamic history.

Ibn al-Mubārak’s *Jihād*

In addition to his prominence as a scholar, Ibn al-Mubārak was also known for his martial pursuits in the frontlines against the Byzantine forces. One of his books, *Kitāb al-Jihād*, is a compilation of *ḥadīths* attributed to the Prophet and important figures of the early Islamic period that deal entirely with topics related to *jihād*. Al-Dhahabī refers to him as the “pride of the *mujāhidīn*,”⁹³ saying he was the “leader of the brave ... he used to perform hajj one year and he would be fighting for the sake of God the next year.”⁹⁴ Ibn Kathīr states, regarding Ibn al-Mubārak, “He was known for participating in battles and performing the *ḥajj* frequently.”⁹⁵ Ibn Abī Ḥātim states that when he was stationed in the frontlines against the Byzantines, Ibn al-Mubārak used to teach *ḥadīth* to others there as well.⁹⁶ This trend of scholar fighters is one which was prevalent at the time of Ibn al-Mubārak. Various reports indicate that many of Ibn

al-Shuqayr, 3 vols. (Dammam: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 2008), 1:86.

92 Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, 8:168.

93 al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 1:253.

94 al-Dhahabī, *al-ʿIbar fī khabar man ghabar*, ed. Muḥammad Saʿid Basyūnī Zaghlūl, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1985), 1:281.

95 Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, 10:177.

96 Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdīmat al-maʿrifā*, 278.

al-Mubārak's contemporary scholars, including al-Awzā'ī and Fuḍayl b. 'Iyād, regarded spending a period of time at the frontlines as a form of piety.

Recent works by Michael Bonner⁹⁷ and Thomas Sizgorich⁹⁸ illuminate the significance of Ibn al-Mubārak's figure as a *mujāhid* during the period of Late Antiquity. Bonner's work on the nature of warfare on the Arab-Byzantine borders is invaluable to shedding further light on the circumstances surrounding Ibn al-Mubārak. Bonner demonstrates that during Ibn al-Mubārak's time there was a trend of ascetic-scholar warriors that began to enter the *thughūr* and practice *jihād* as a manifestation of their piety. He also asserts that Ibn al-Mubārak was one of the first to establish this trend and that his *Kitāb al-Jihād*, which emphasizes the spiritual elements of *jihād*, is a divergence from earlier works which focused on legal aspects of *jihād*.

Sizgorich's *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity* depicts the perspective prevalent during Ibn al-Mubārak's era, which regarded *jihād* as a means of attaining divine reward and increasing one's standing in the eyes of God. Sizgorich examines concepts of asceticism in the period of Late Antiquity and writes that this period saw an integration of the virtues associated with martial valor into concepts of asceticism practiced by pious figures of the time. Sizgorich asserts that many of the Muslim fighters in the Arab-Byzantine fronts adopted these concepts and shaped their own form of piety that was articulated in the form of *jihād* against Muslim enemies. Sizgorich's work raises important questions regarding the origins of the idea of *jihād* as a form of piety as well as the nature of Muslim-Christian intellectual exchanges on the ideals of the practice of piety. I present a more in-depth study of the role of Ibn al-Mubārak as a *mujāhid* below.

Ibn al-Mubārak's Role in *Ḥadīth* Transmission

Ibn al-Mubārak played a pivotal role in the network of scholars transmitting *ḥadīth*. He was given the title of "amīr al-mu'minīn" by many of his contemporaries. Al-Baghdādī relates that Abū Usāma, a prominent Kufan *ḥadīth* transmitter, is reported to have said, "When counted among the

97 Cf. Michael Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies in the Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1996); and "Some Observations Concerning the Early Development of Jihad on the Arab-Byzantine Frontier," *Studia Islamica* 75 (1992): 5–31.

98 Thomas Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

people of *ḥadīth*, Ibn al-Mubārak is like the *amīr al-mu'minīn*.⁹⁹ Descriptions in classical texts also indicate that he was an important critic in the field of narrator reliability (*ʿilm al-rijāl*). Al-Dhahabī states that when asked about fabricated prophetic traditions Ibn al-Mubārak replied, "The intelligent, critical, and knowledgeable scholars live for their sake [i.e., for the sake of refuting them]." Al-Dhahabī relates another anecdote in which, he states, an individual accused of heresy was ordered by Hārūn al-Rashīd to be executed. It is reported that the man asked why he was being executed. The reply attributed to al-Rashīd is, "To relieve the worshipers of you and your heresy." Upon which he replied, "And what can you do about the one thousand narrations that I attributed to the Messenger of God even though he did not utter a single word of them?" Hārūn al-Rashīd is reported to have replied, "O enemy of God, and what can you do about Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī and Ibn al-Mubārak who will sift through them and extract them one by one?"¹⁰⁰ Regardless of whether this incident actually happened, the reference to Ibn al-Mubārak demonstrates the general reverence scholars and prominent figures had for Ibn al-Mubārak as a *ḥadīth* transmitter and the role he played in establishing the authenticity of *ḥadīth*. Al-Dhahabī also writes about an incident in which a *ḥadīth* narrated by Ḥabīb b. Khālīd al-Mālikī was relayed to him and Ibn al-Mubārak said, "It is not reliable (it is nothing)." It was then said to him, "But he is a righteous shaykh." He said, "Yes, he is righteous in everything except narration."¹⁰¹

Ibn al-Mubārak's position on various *ḥadīths* is also portrayed by biographical dictionaries as the "barometer" by which *ḥadīths* and individuals were measured. Al-Dhahabī reports that 'Abdallāh b. Idrīs said, "We have nothing to do with any *ḥadīth* that is not known to Ibn al-Mubārak."¹⁰² Al-Baghdādī cited Aswad b. Sālim as having said, "Ibn al-Mubārak was an *imām* who was followed. He was the foremost in knowledge of the Sunna. If you see a man disparaging Ibn al-Mubārak, then question his Islam."¹⁰³

It appears that Ibn al-Mubārak's prominent role in *ḥadīth* can be attributed to a number of factors. First, he was among a minority of scholars who were in favor of recording *ḥadīths* and preserving them through writing. The greater ability to retain and accurately transmit prophetic traditions with the assistance of writing is clear. Hence, Ibn al-Mubārak was able to maintain a high level of accuracy while transmitting a vast number of *ḥadīths* which he had written down. Second, Ibn al-Mubārak traveled extensively. The ref-

99 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 10:165.

100 al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 1:252.

101 Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdimat al-ma'rifa*, 1:271.

102 Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, 11:503.

103 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 10:168.

erences to Ibn al-Mubārak in biographical dictionaries consistently make reference to the extensiveness of his travels. His traveling throughout the Muslim lands enabled him to come into contact with a vast array of scholars and *ḥadīth* transmitters which he consolidated in his own transmissions. Al-Dhahabī writes, “A vast number of people around the world transmitted from him, to such an extent that they cannot be counted. This is because he traveled continually from the time he was young.”¹⁰⁴

Third, the consistent and detailed reference to Ibn al-Mubārak as a figure of piety and reverence indicate that although historians cannot determine the accuracy of all of these reports, the ways in which he was consistently portrayed in the classical texts indicate the generally high regard and reverence people had for him as a scholar and a pious figure. Furthermore, primary sources referring to Ibn al-Mubārak do not reveal any evidence of his having been a contentious figure; this would have been clear from the existence of both praise and criticism by those either promoting Ibn al-Mubārak or censuring him. It is also important to note that while he was depicted as an important and pious figure, there is no evidence that he was regarded as a legendary figure subject to hagiographical material and the consequent fabrications and exaggerations associated with them.

Biographical dictionaries report a large number of *ḥadīth* scholars from which Ibn al-Mubārak transmitted *ḥadīths* and to whom he relayed *ḥadīths*. Some of his more prominent teachers included Abū Ḥanīfa, the two Ḥammāds, Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna, Ibn Jurayh, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Shu‘ba, al-A‘mash, Mālik b. Anas, Ma‘mar, and al-Awzā‘ī. Some of his well-known students were Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī, Abū Dāwūd, Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn, Ibn Abī Shayba, Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyāḍ, Sufyān al-Thawrī, and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī. There are numerous overlaps where a scholar is reported to have been both a teacher and student of Ibn al-Mubārak, thus indicating that they transmitted from each other. Ma‘mar b. Sulaymān is reported to have said, “I was with Ibn al-Mubārak and he would narrate to me and I would narrate to him.” These individuals, and their method of *ḥadīth* transmission in relation to the figure of Ibn al-Mubārak will be studied in greater depth in the section devoted to *ḥadīth* in the career of ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak.

Ibn al-Mubārak’s *Zuhd*

‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak’s understanding and practice of *zuhd* is an integral element of his biography that I examine in depth in the following chapters.

¹⁰⁴ al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 1:253.

While often translated as asceticism, a more accurate translation of this word based on the context and practice of Ibn al-Mubārak would arguably be “piety.” Ibn al-Mubārak was not an ascetic and yet he promoted what was known as *zuhd*—moral and ethical practice based on Islamic injunctions.

One of his important contributions to the field of *zuhd* is his work *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, which laid the foundation for an entire genre of *zuhd* books (*kutub al-zuhd*) in the centuries that followed. These are considered the early works from which the field of *taṣawwuf* developed; they are looked upon as proto-Sufi works that demonstrate the early origins (before the institutionalization of Sufism) of works devoted to piety. Alexander Knysh examines Ibn al-Mubārak’s work in light of the development of the field of Sufism, and states that Ibn al-Mubārak’s *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, “contains hundreds of pious aphorisms, moral and ethical precepts which became the building blocks of later Sufi tradition.”¹⁰⁵ Knysh also depicts Ibn al-Mubārak’s “devotional style” as one similar to the “mild asceticism” that Hurvitz depicts,¹⁰⁶ an asceticism that shuns worldliness but not the world itself. ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak was known for his success as a merchant and his disapproval of ascetics who utilized the concept of *tawakkul* as a pretext for not striving to earn a livelihood.

105 Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 21.

106 Nimrod Hurvitz, “Biographies and Mild Asceticism: A Study of Islamic Moral Imagination,” *Studia Islamica* 85 (1997): 41–65.

‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak and *Ḥadīth*

Ibn al-Mubārak’s Role in *Ḥadīth* Transmission

Though he did not begin his pursuit of knowledge until relatively late in life,¹ ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak came to be regarded by his peers and later generations of scholars as one of the most erudite scholars of the Islamic sciences. Ibn Sa’d writes in his *Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, “He compiled many books on various elements of the sciences (*abwāb al-‘ilm*) and its categories. People then transmitted this from him and copied these from him (in writing).”² Al-Dhahabī also writes that Ibn al-Mubārak, “Compiled many books.”³ It is also noteworthy that al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī mentions that part of Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī’s (196–246/810–870) early education was to memorize the books of ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak.⁴ Ibn al-Mubārak’s works are works of *ḥadīths*, a great number of which are not prophetic but rather are words of the Companions or their Successors. The majority of Ibn al-Mubārak’s books do not appear to have been preserved. Their existence is inferred from references to them in later works and their contents can often be gleaned from later books that incorporated

- 1 Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tarikh Baghdad*, 10:168. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī writes that Ibn al-Mubārak set out for Iraq at the beginning of the year 141/758. If Ibn al-Mubārak was born in 118/736, this would mean that he did not begin his pursuit of scholarship until the age of twenty-three. In the context of Ibn al-Mubārak’s era this would have been considered relatively late to start one’s studies. Perhaps, this was among the reasons that Ibn al-Mubārak was among the first to promote the preservation of *ḥadīth* through writing and books alongside memorization. Ibn al-Mubārak’s written records of *ḥadīth* made him one of the most highly sought after *ḥadīth* scholars of his time.
- 2 Muḥammad b. Sa’d [Ibn Sa’d], *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, ed. ‘Alī Muḥammad ‘Umar, 11 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 2001), 9:376. Given that Ibn Sa’d’s short description of Ibn al-Mubārak centers on the latter’s writing of *ḥadīths*, we can conclude that this was an important distinguishing factor of his scholarship.
- 3 al-Dhahabī, *al-Ibar*, 1:217. Among the distinguishing characteristics al-Dhahabī mentions is that Ibn al-Mubārak “published many printed works” (*wa ṣanafa taṣānif kathīra*).
- 4 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārikh Baghdad*, 2:325. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī includes a quote in his biography of Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī in which al-Bukhārī recounts his educational training as a youth and mentions that by the age of sixteen he memorized the books of Waki’ and Ibn al-Mubārak and “learned their words,” indicating that Ibn al-Mubārak’s writing was highly regarded as a foundational work that students of *ḥadīth* needed to study.

parts of Ibn al-Mubārak’s literature.⁵ ‘Abdallāh b al-Mubārak’s known works can be divided into three categories: those not known to be extant but mentioned in other works, those in manuscript form awaiting publication, and those which have been published.

Ibn al-Mubārak’s Unpublished Books

Ibn al-Mubārak has a number of books that are mentioned in other texts. These include the following:

1. *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn*: This work is mentioned in *Kashf al-ẓunūn*,⁶ *Hadīyyat al-ʿarīfīn*,⁷ and *al-Risālat al-mustaṭṭifa*.⁸ Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Bukhārī writes that an incomplete manuscript of the *Arbaʿīn* is also said to exist in Indonesia; it contains 27 of the 40 *ḥadīths*.⁹ Ḥajjī Khalifa writes, after listing the forty *ḥadīths* of ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak, that al-Nawawī stated that Ibn al-Mubārak’s compilation is the first printed compilation of the “forty *ḥadīth*” genre he is aware of (*huwa awwal man ‘alimtuḥu ṣanaʿa fihī*).¹⁰

- 5 Raif Khoury’s article, “L’Importance de L’*Iṣāba* d’Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAṣqalānī pour l’Étude de la Literature Arabe des Premiers Siecles l’Islamiques: Vue a Travers l’Exemple des Oeuvres de ‘Abdallāh Ibn al-Mubārak (118/736–181/797),” *Studia Islamica* 42 (1975), 115–145, deals with Ibn al-Mubārak’s role as a transmitter of non-prophetic historical reports. In this article, Khoury argues that many later Islamic texts quote the contents of earlier texts that are no longer extant. He uses Ibn al-Mubārak’s *Kitāb al-Tārīkh* and his *Kitāb al-Birr wa-l-ṣīlah* as examples of works that are no longer extant but whose contents can be reconstructed from later sources such as Ibn Ḥajar’s *Iṣāba*, which quote these texts.
- 6 Muṣṭafā b. ‘Abdallāh Ḥajjī Khalifa, *Kashf al-ẓunūn ‘an asāmī al-kutub wa-l-funūn*, ed. Muḥammad Sharaf al-Dīn Yaltakaya, 2 vols. (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1941), 1:57.
- 7 Ismāʿīl b. Muḥammad Amin al-Babānī l-Baghdādī, *Hadīyyat al-ʿarīfīn bi-asmā’ al-muʿallifīn wa-āthār al-muṣannifīn*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1951), 1:438.
- 8 Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Abī l-Fayḍ Jaʿfar b. Idrīs al-Kattānī, *al-Risālat al-mustaṭṭifa fī kutub al-sunnat al-musharrafā*, ed. Muḥammad al-Muntaṣir b. Muḥammad al-Zamzamī (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmiyya, 2000), 102.
- 9 Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Bukhārī, *ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak al-Marwazī: al-muḥaddith al-nāqid* (Mecca: Maktabat al-Nashirūn, 2003), 67.
- 10 The impetus behind the composition of forty *ḥadīths* is the *ḥadīth* attributed to the Prophet which states: “Whoever preserves for my community forty *ḥadīths* from matters of its religion, he will be counted among the scholars and raised among the martyrs.” There are variant wordings of this *ḥadīth* from different chains of transmission that *ḥadīth* scholars regard as weak. Nevertheless, a genre of forty *ḥadīth* compilations emerged in the Islamic scholarly tradition. Al-Nawawī’s statement is significant given that ultimately it is his compilation of forty *ḥadīths* that became the most renowned collection among

2. *Kitāb al-Tārikh*: The existence of this work is mentioned in Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*,¹¹ *al-Hadiyyat al-ʿarifīn*,¹² and *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*.¹³ References in classical texts also give us glimpses of what this book may have contained. Ibn Ḥajar writes in *al-Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, "Ibn al-Mubārak said in his *Tārikh*: al-Maʿallī b. Hilāl is fine as long as he does not transmit *ḥadīths*."¹⁴ Similarly, al-Dhahabī cites Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Tārikh* in his *Mizān al-ʿitidāl*, saying, "Ibn al-Mubārak says about Yazīd b. Abū Ziyād al-Kūfī 'arambihi' [i.e., *akrim bihi*],' this is how he is [described] in his *Tārikh*."¹⁵

Unlike contemporary histories that describe events, Ibn al-Mubārak's *Tārikh* reflects the numerous early Islamic classical texts whose "histories" focused on the documentation of *ḥadīth* transmitters and their reliability.¹⁶

3. *Kitāb Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*: This work is mentioned in Ibn Nadīm's *Fihrist*,¹⁷ *Hadiyyat al-ʿarifīn*,¹⁸ and *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*.¹⁹ No further information was found on this work.

4. *Kitāb al-Daqāʿiq fī l-raqāʿiq*: This work is mentioned *Hadiyyat al-ʿarifīn*.²⁰ The *Kashf al-zunūn* also refers to a book by Ibn al-Mubārak known as *al-Raqāʿiq*, and it would seem that this is the same work. Another possibility is that this is another title for Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* since the terms *zuhd* and *raqāʿiq* were sometimes used interchangeably or in similar contexts; there is no way of determining whether this is accurate without having the work in hand. The edition of the *Kitāb al-Zuhd* compiled by al-Aʿẓamī is entitled, *Kitāb al-Zuhd wa-l-raqāʿiq*.

later Muslims.

11 Muḥammad b. Ishāq Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. Ibrāhīm Ramaḍān (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1997), 280.

12 al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-ʿarifīn*, 1:438.

13 Muḥammad b. ʿAlī l-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad ʿUmar, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Wahba, 1972), 1:243.

14 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 10:242. Ibn Ḥajar makes another reference to Ibn al-Mubārak's *Tārikh*, saying, "Ibn al-Mubārak said in his *Tārikh*: al-Taymī and ʿAliyya are from the scholars of the people of Basra." Cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 4:202.

15 al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-ʿitidāl*, 4:423. Also see al-Bukhārī's discussion of these references, al-Bukhārī, *ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak*, 56.

16 Other examples include the *Tārikh* of Ibn Maʿīn, the *Tārikh* of al-Bukhārī, and *Tārikh* of Abū Zurʿā.

17 Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 280.

18 al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-ʿarifīn*, 1:438.

19 al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, 1:243.

20 al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-ʿarifīn*, 1:438.

5. *Kitāb al-Sunan*: This is also mentioned in *al-Hadiyyat al-‘arifin*²¹ and Ibn al-Nadīm’s *Fihrist*.²²

Ibn al-Mubārak’s Published Works

1. *Kitāb al-Birr wa-l-ṣilah*: This work originally existed as a manuscript preserved on microform in al-Zahiriyya library of Damascus. *Kitāb al-Birr wa-l-ṣilah* along with *al-Musnad* were printed by Muṣṭafā ‘Uthmān Muḥammad as a part of his doctoral thesis (al-Azhar University, 1979). The two works—*Kitāb al-Birr wa-l-ṣilah* and Ibn al-Mubārak’s *Musnad*—were published together in 1991. *Kitāb al-Birr wa-l-ṣilah* is a compilation of 353 *ḥadīths* related to the general topic of maintaining good relations with family members, particularly parents. The word *birr* is most often used in the context of *birr al-wālidayn*, which is the practice of honoring one’s parents. It is considered one of the most important obligations in the Islamic tradition and there are numerous verses in the Qur’ān and *ḥadīths* that make reference to this. *Al-Ṣilah* refers to the “ties of the womb,” or ties with one’s relatives. After discussing aspects of a believer’s ideal relationship with his or her parents, this text includes *ḥadīths* which also emphasize the importance of maintaining kinship bonds and treating relatives in a good manner.

Ibn al-Mubārak’s work begins with 76 *ḥadīths* that are directly related to acting virtuously toward one’s parents. The rest of the *ḥadīths* included are ordered in accordance to topics most closely related to honoring parents, it then diverges into more general topics such as the humane treatment of slaves and responsibilities toward children and others under one’s care. The other divisions of this *ḥadīth* text include subtopics, such as the appropriate way to deal with parental requests to do that which displeases God, honoring one’s parents after their deaths, maintaining “ties of the womb” (*ṣilat al-raḥm*) and the gravity of breaking these ties, dealing with orphans entrusted to one’s care, spending of one’s wealth on one’s kin, and the appropriate way to treat servants and slaves. The text was divided into subtopics by the editor in order to facilitate its analysis—the organization does not reflect the original manuscript.

The *ḥadīths* included in this text are considered of varying strengths of authenticity, meaning there are *ḥadīths* that were later categorized by traditionists as *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan*, as well as *ḍa‘īf*. Hence, *Kitāb al-Birr wa-l-ṣilah* is not a compilation limited to *ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīths*. Rather than being compiled

21 Ibid.

22 Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 280.

on the basis of strength, as other *jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ* works generally are, they are compiled topically. In addition, *Kitāb al-birr wa-l-ṣiḥāḥ*, like most of Ibn al-Mubārak's *ḥadīth* compilations, are not limited to *muṭṭaṣil* prophetic traditions. Some *ḥadīths* are sayings of Companions and other *ḥadīths* are sayings of the Successors (*tābiʿīn*) of the Companions. This type of compilation is a work on virtuous acts (*faḍāʾil al-aʿmāl*); it includes a liberal range of sayings of wisdom and inspiration, sayings that would motivate others to behave in virtuous ways. It was not a work of Islamic jurisprudence with a stringent standard of sources to establish the specific legal rulings of particular actions.

2. *Musnad Ibn al-Mubārak*: This *ḥadīth* compilation collected by ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak is significant on many levels. First, it is one of the earliest documentations of the prophetic *ḥadīths* in the second/eighth century, a period which became known as the era of the *muṣannaḥāt* movement. There is only one known manuscript of this text, which Fuat Sezgin mentioned is found in al-Ṣahiriyya Library in Damascus.²³ There are two published editions of the *Musnad* of Ibn al-Mubārak: one edited by Ṣubḥī al-Badrī al-Samarraʾī,²⁴ and the second, edited by Muṣṭafā ʿUthmān Muḥammad, which combines Ibn al-Mubārak's *Musnad* and his *Birr wa-l-ṣiḥā* into one volume.²⁵ According to the introduction, Muṣṭafā ʿUthmān Muḥammad was the first to edit this *musnad*; it was part of his dissertation in 1979 and later published as a book in 1991. Unlike Ibn al-Mubārak's many other works that include sayings of important figures other than the Prophet Muḥammad, this text, like the majority of texts in the *musnad* genre, contains only the sayings of the Prophet himself. The *ḥadīths* included are of varying strengths and qualities and appear in a wide variety of later *ḥadīth* collections.

3. *Kitāb al-Jihād*—ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Jihād* is known to be the earliest book dedicated solely to the topic of *jihād*. Ḥajjī Khalīfa writes, "... *Kitāb al-Jihād* by al-Imām ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak al-Ḥanzalī who died in 181, is the first author to write on this [topic]."²⁶ Al-Kattānī makes a similar reference to Ibn al-Mubārak's work:

The *Kitāb al-Jihād* of Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak b. Wāḍiḥ al-Marwazī al-Ḥanzalī, the *mawla* of Banī Ḥanzala al-Tamīmī from

23 Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 15 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 1:95.

24 Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak, *Musnad al-Imām ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak*, ed. Subḥī Badrī l-Samarraʾī (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1987).

25 Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak, *Musnad ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak wa-yalihi kitāb al-birr wa-l-ṣiḥāḥ*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿUthmān Muḥammad (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1991).

26 Ḥajjī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-ẓunūn*, 2:1410.

the *tābi‘ tābi‘in al-ḥāfiẓ*, is one of the leading scholars who died in Hit (a city by the Euphrates) during the year 182; he was the first to write on *jihād*.²⁷

This work initiated a series of other works in the genre of *kutub al-jihād*.²⁸ ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak’s *Kitāb al-Jihād* is currently available due to the efforts of Nazīh Ḥammād whose introduction to his edition of the *Kitāb al-Jihād* provides important information on the origins of the manuscript he used. He composed his edition from the only known manuscript of this work, which is in Leipzig. This manuscript is referred to by both Sezgin²⁹ and Brockelmann³⁰ in their sources. Ḥammād notes that both Ibn Ḥajar³¹ and al-Shawkānī³² refer to numerous *ḥadīths* that they found in the *Kitāb al-Jihād* of Ibn al-Mubārak. Ḥammād argues that this manuscript is a fairly accurate version of the original *Kitāb al-Jihād* written in the second/eighth century; he bases this claim on the existence of the same *ḥadīths* mentioned in other primary sources. Ḥammād believes that these manuscripts were copied in the fifth century due to three stamps extant on the manuscript; two of them date to 462 AH and the third dates to 463 AH. Like Ibn al-Mubārak’s other works, the *Kitāb al-Jihād* is structured as a series of *ḥadīths*, and as in his other compilations, it is not dedicated to *ḥadīths* solely uttered by the Prophet, or *ḥadīths* that were considered to be of any particular category of accuracy. This book is essentially a compilation of the sayings (on the topic of *jihād*) of the Prophet, Companions, Successors, and other pious figures. I analyze this work in greater depth in chapter 3.

4. *Kitāb al-Zuhd wa-l-raḡā’iq*. This work is probably the most well known work by ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak. While often translated in a literal sense as asceticism, the word *zuhd*, as I discuss in chapter 4, was utilized in this time

27 al-Kattānī, *al-Risāla al-mustaṭṭifa*, 42.

28 Some of the later books dedicated to the topic of *jihād* include the *Kitāb al-Jihād* of Ibn Abī ‘Aṣīm (d. 287/900) and the *Kitāb al-Jihād* of ‘Alī b. Ṭāhir al-Sulamī (d. 500/1106). Centuries later the latter compiled his well-known *Kitāb al-Jihād* calling the Muslims of greater Syria to fight the crusaders by engaging in aspects of the “lesser” and “greater” *jihād* against the crusaders. Many of the major *ḥadīth* works that were compiled in the third/ninth century also include a chapter or a *kitāb al-jihād*. Examples of these include the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd, and al-Haythamī’s *Mustadrak*.

29 Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:95.

30 Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litterature* (Leiden: Brill, 1949), 3:153.

31 Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar al-‘Aṣqalānī, *al-Iṣāba fī tamyiz al-ṣaḥāba*, ed. Muṣṭafā Muḥammad, 4 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Tijāriyya, 1939), 1:354.

32 Muḥammad b. ‘Alī l-Shawkānī, *Nayl al-awṭār min aḥādīth sayyid al-akhyār*, ed. Ṭāhā ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf Sa’d, 10 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, 1978), 7:237.

period more generally to mean piety. Considering Ibn al-Mubārak's success as a merchant, the particular type of *zuhd* espoused here is not one that rejects the world in its entirety. This work is essential to laying a foundation for later more sophisticated definitions of Islamic piety and establishing the gradual systematization of Islamic sciences related to this.³³

Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-A'zamī was the first to publish Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Zuhd*.³⁴ This work is relatively longer than the other compilations of Ibn al-Mubārak; it consists of 1,627 *ḥadīths*. Al-A'zamī includes another 436 *ḥadīths* in a separate section at the end of his edition of the *Kitāb al-Zuhd*. These *ḥadīths* are included in Nu'aym b. Ḥammād's version of the manuscript of Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Zuhd*. Al-A'zamī mentions in his introduction that the *Kitāb al-Zuhd* was transmitted through a variety of chains of transmitters whose transmissions are currently found in three different manuscripts of the text which the editor relied on to compose his edition. Al-A'zamī mentions that the classical sources on *ḥadīth* criticism did not regard Nu'aym b. Ḥammād as a strong transmitter. Al-A'zamī writes that this does not diminish the reliability of the *Kitāb al-Zuhd* in general since the same *ḥadīths* are also corroborated by other transmitters such as al-Ḥusayn al-Marwazī who is considered a strong transmitter. Nu'aym b. Ḥammād's status in *ḥadīth* transmission is significant only for the *ḥadīths* for which he is the lone transmitter.³⁵ Although I have not found an explicit explanation for the existence of this distinct section of Nu'aym b. Ḥammād's *ḥadīth* in al-A'zamī's edition of the *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, it would appear from al-A'zamī's comments in the introduction that these *ḥadīths* (from Nu'aym b. Ḥammād as a lone transmitter) were separated because they are considered less reliable than the *ḥadīths* in the rest of the text.

Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* is divided into sections that relate to a wide range of aspects of Islamic piety. The editor has chosen to label each subsection according to the topic covered for greater clarity. Subjects extant in this work include the merits of worship; one's state of presence with God (*khushū'*) and fear (*khawf*); the remembrance of death; humility; charity; the merits of showing kindness to orphans; greed; and the remembrance of God.

33 In his valuable work on the history of Sufi literature, Mustafa Aşkar refers to Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* as the first written work focusing on Islamic piety upon which other works on *zuhd* and later *taṣawwuf* evolved. Cf. Mustafa Aşkar, *Tasavvuf Tarihi Literatürü* (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2006).

34 'Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Zuhd wa-l-raqā'iq*, ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-A'zamī (Malikawān: Majlis Iḥyā' al-Ma'ārif, 1966).

35 Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, ed. al-A'zamī, 20.

This book is strikingly similar in format to the *Risāla al-Qushayriyya*;³⁶ it is believed that Ibn al-Mubārak’s work served as a foundational text for the later systematized science of *taṣawwuf*. Ibn al-Mubārak’s *Kitāb al-Zuhd* is significant for being a composite of all the anecdotes, figures, and sayings on the nature of the Islamic vision of piety. Similar to his *Kitāb al-Jihād*, his *Kitāb al-Zuhd* is the first of the genre of *kutub al-zuhd* books that emerged following his model.

Teachers and Students of ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak

Ibn al-Mubārak is quoted as having said, “I have learned from 4,000 scholars and transmitted from 1,000 of them.” While these are not likely to have been intended as the actual number of scholars Ibn al-Mubārak studied and/or transmitted from, it does appear to reflect, in general, the relatively large number of teachers and students Ibn al-Mubārak studied with. Over the course of the following century, as *ḥadīth* books were being compiled, Ibn al-Mubārak consistently appears, in all of the major *ḥadīth* compilations, as an important transmitter of numerous *ḥadīths*. Muḥammad Sa‘īd al-Bukhārī examined the six canonical *ḥadīth* sources and found that in these six books alone, Ibn al-Mubārak is recorded as having transmitted from 539 scholars.³⁷ Ibn al-Mubārak’s ability to transmit from a vast array of scholars is probably due to several factors. First, Ibn al-Mubārak is known to have traveled extensively; this enabled him to have contact with a wide range of scholars over a large geographical area. His meticulousness in pursuing scholars and their books does not appear to be exaggerated praise by the classical sources but rather a reasonable explanation of his success and importance as a scholar. He is also cited as having frequently made the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina; it is known that during the holy months Mecca was a hub where scholars from around the world gathered. Rather than travel to Morocco or Isfahan, Mecca became a central meeting point that facilitated an exchange of ideas, knowledge, and *ḥadīths*.

Ibn al-Mubārak also differed from many of the older generations of scholars in that he insisted on writing *ḥadīths* rather than relying solely on

36 In his *Risāla al-Qushayrī* uses a similar structure: he includes quotes and anecdotes of the Prophet but also the Companions, their Successors, and many other pious figures and organizes them in sections classified according to topic. Unlike a book of *fiqh*, the topics in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* focus on inward aspects of Islamic piety rather than outward practice. Al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* is also considered an early proto-Sufi work.

37 al-Bukhārī, *‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak*, 80.

one's memory. This was regarded as a weakness by some who viewed writing as evidence of a lack of expertise or a poor memory. Ibn al-Mubārak, however, believed that making a written record of *ḥadīths* was an important tool that could improve accuracy and enable one to retain large stores of information. Finally, the vast range of students and teachers from whom Ibn al-Mubārak studied enabled his fame and renown as a scholar to be established in the larger network of Islamic scholarship and facilitated the transmission and preservation of his books. Biographical dictionaries note that Ibn al-Mubārak studied with scholars who were his contemporaries, but also with those older or younger than him. Oftentimes, the same scholars he transmitted from would also transmit other *ḥadīths* from him. This extensive exposure to scholars and their centers of learning in the second/eighth-century Muslim world had an important role in molding Ibn al-Mubārak as a prominent figure in *ḥadīth* sciences and Islamic scholarship. A brief overview of some of Ibn al-Mubārak's key teachers and students gives us a more profound understanding of the milieu in which he functioned as a scholar.

Ibn al-Mubārak's Teachers

Ma'mar b. Rāshid

His full name is Abū 'Urwa Ma'mar b. Rāshid b. Abī 'Umra al-Azdī *mawlāhum*.³⁸ Ma'mar's situation as a key scholarly link in *ḥadīth* transmission between Ibn al-Mubārak's generation and the generation preceding Ma'mar makes Ibn al-Mubārak's relationship with him significant. Ma'mar b. Rāshid was born in Basra in 96/714 and spent the early years of his life there; he died in 153/770. He is reported to have begun his scholastic training in 110/728 at the age of fourteen, under the supervision of Qatāda b. Da'āma.³⁹ Ma'mar is distinguished in Islamic biographical dictionaries as being one the most prominent *ḥadīth* transmitters of the second/eighth century and a key figure in the transmission of *ḥadīths* during his time. Ibn Ḥajar writes that the important *ḥadīth* critics, 'Alī b. al-Madīnī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, considered Ma'mar one of the primary figures upon which the chains of transmission depended.⁴⁰ Furthermore, Ibn Ma'in is reported to have considered Mālik and Ma'mar to be the most reliable students

38 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 10:243.

39 Qatāda b. Da'āma al-Sadūsī l-Baṣrī (61–117/680–735) was a sound transmitter from Basra. He was considered by Ibn Abī Ḥātim to be second only to al-Zuhri in his transmission of the *ḥadīths* of Anas b. Mālik. Qatāda transmitted from many of the important Followers (*tābi'in*), such as Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, 'Imrān b. Ḥusayn, and Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab. In addition to Ma'mar, Qatāda was also a teacher of many key figures of the generation following him, including al-Awzā'i, Shu'ba, and Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī. Cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 8:351.

40 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 8:351.

of al-Zuhri.⁴¹ In another report, Ibn Ma‘īn states that Ma‘mar was more reliable in the transmission of al-Zuhri’s *ḥadīths* than Ibn ‘Uyayna. The comparison of Ma‘mar with other seminal figures in the network of early *ḥadīth* transmitters is an indication of the prominence of Ma‘mar b. Rāshid’s own scholarship. Ibn Ḥanbal writes that Ma‘mar b. Rāshid was one the most prominent *ḥadīth* scholars during his period. His direct and close connection to al-Zuhri made him a leading figure in the perpetuation of the traditions al-Zuhri collected. Al-Dhahabī writes, “I never compared anyone to Ma‘mar except that I found Ma‘mar exceeded him in his pursuit [of knowledge], and he was of the most prominent seekers of *ḥadīth* during his time.”⁴² Ibn Abī Ḥātim writes, “The *isnād* stopped at six individuals, all of whom Ma‘mar met and wrote *ḥadīths* from. According to my knowledge, another Ma‘mar met al-Zuhri,⁴³ as did ‘Amr b. Dīnār⁴⁴ from the people of the Hijaz, Abū Ishāq⁴⁵ and al-ʿAʿmash⁴⁶ from the people of Kufa, Qatāda⁴⁷ from Basra, and Yahyā b. Abī Kathīr from Yemen.”⁴⁸

41 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 8:351.

42 al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 190.

43 Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Muslim b. ‘Ubaydallāh b. Shihāb al-Zuhri, d. 124/741. He was born in Medina and later traveled to Damascus where he was commissioned by Umar II to collect the various prophetic traditions and record them in writing. He is regarded as a sound and foundational transmitter by critics of *ḥadīth*. Cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 9:445.

44 Abū Muḥammad ‘Amr b. Dīnār al-Athram al-Jumālī *mawlāhum* al-Makkī, d. 126/743. He is reputed to have transmitted reports from major Companions such as ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar, ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ, and Abū Hurayra. His location in Mecca and his access to early Muslims made ‘Amr b. Dīnār’s *ḥadīths* highly sought. Cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 8:28.

45 Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Abū Yahyā l-Madanī, d. 184/800. He transmitted from al-Zuhri and Yahyā b. Saʿīd al-Anṣārī. Among those who took *ḥadīths* from him were prominent figures such as Sufyān al-Thawri (who was older than him), Ibn Jurayj, al-Shāfiʿī, and Abū Nuʿaym. Cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 1:158.

46 Abū Muḥammad Sulaymān b. Mihrān al-Asadī l-Kāhili l-ʿAʿmash, d. 147/764. He was a transmitter from among the Followers (*tābiʿīn*), who transmitted reports from the Companions. His family was originally from Tabaristan and he was born in Kufa, where he became known as one of its major *ḥadīth* transmitters. He was ranked as a sound transmitter (*thiqa*). Cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 4:222.

47 Qatāda b. Daʿāma b. Qatāda al-Sadūsī l-Baṣrī (d. 117/735) transmitted from early figures such as Anas b. Mālīk and Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab. Cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 8:351.

48 Abū Naṣr Yahyā b. Abī Kathīr al-Ṭāʾī l-Yamāmī (d. 132/749) was regarded as a sound transmitter of the traditions of al-Zuhri (*thiqa ḥāfiẓ fī l-Zuhri*). He is also described as a scholarly peer of al-Zuhri. Cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 11:268. Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdimat al-maʿrifā*, 8:257.

Ma'mar b. Rāshid settled in Yemen at an early age; many of the prominent *ḥadīth* transmitters of his time traveled to record *ḥadīths* from him. Two other key figures in the *ḥadīth* network, Sufyān b. 'Uyayna and Sufyān al-Thawrī, traveled to Yemen to study with him in 151/768 and 152/769, respectively.⁴⁹

Ma'mar b. Rāshid transmitted an important segment of the *maghāzī* literature that was later incorporated into other texts.⁵⁰ Ibn al-Nadīm writes that he was a “transmitter of *ṣīyar* and *maghāzī*.”⁵¹ Ma'mar b. Rāshid also compiled what is known as *al-Jāmi'*. These were essentially books of *ḥadīths* categorized according to subject. His *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* was transmitted by his student 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī⁵² and he included *ḥadīths* from other sources as part of his *Muṣannaḡ*;⁵³ manuscripts of it are currently available in the Suleymaniye Library in Istanbul. 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī also transmitted parts of a *tafsīr* attributed to Ma'mar b. Rāshid.

Ma'mar b. Rāshid was generally regarded as a strong transmitter, particularly of al-Zuhri's traditions. Ibn Ma'in is reported to have said, “he is the most reliable transmitter of al-Zuhri.”⁵⁴ Ibn al-Mubārak is reported to have said: “When I look at the *ḥadīths* of Ma'mar and Yūnus I am amazed. It is as though they came out of one [source of] light (*mishkāṭ*).”⁵⁵

Yūnus⁵⁶ was known to have been a prominent transmitter from al-Zuhri who transmitted his *ḥadīths* through writing. Ma'mar was also regarded as the most reliable transmitter from al-Zuhri and hence it would appear that Ibn al-Mubārak is referring to al-Zuhri as a teacher of Yūnus and Ma'mar, from whom they both transmitted. Sources report that Ibn al-Mubārak took

49 Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 5:497.

50 For a detailed account of the *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* see Ma'mar b. Rāshid, ed. and trans. Sean W. Anthony, *The Expeditions: An Early Biography of Muhammad* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

51 Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 123.

52 'Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām b. Nāfi' al-Ḥumayrī l-Ṣan'ānī (126–211/743–826).

53 Harald Motzki's work analyzes the *Muṣannaḡ* of 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī and through the reconstruction of elements of this compilation demonstrates that the development of Islamic law can be traced to a period significantly earlier than that asserted by Joseph Schacht. Motzki argues that some of Schacht's theories need to be revisited in light of newly available textual material. Cf. Harald Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

54 al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 190.

55 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 11:450.

56 Yūnus b. Yazīd b. Abū Najād, d. 159/775. Ḥanbal b. Ishāq is reported to have said, “No one is more knowledgeable of the *ḥadīths* of al-Zuhri except Yūnus who used to write them down.” Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 11:450.

ḥadīths from Ma‘mar b. Rāshid during the pilgrimage in Mecca.⁵⁷ The following reference reiterates the important role the annual pilgrimage played as an opportunity for scholars to meet and exchange their ideas.

Abū ‘Abdallāh was asked, “Did ‘Abdallāh (b. al-Mubārak) take *ḥadīths* (*sami‘a*) from Ma‘mar? He replied, “He took *ḥadīths* from him in Mecca.” It was said to him, “So he did not take any *ḥadīths* from him in Basra?” He said, “No. No one wrote from Ma‘mar in Basra except the transmitters of lone traditions (*ghurabā*), such as Ismā‘īl b. ‘Aliyya and Yazīd b. Zuray‘.”

Sufyān al-Thawrī

Abū ‘Abdallāh Sufyān b. Sa‘īd b. Masrūq b. Ḥamza al-Thawrī l-Kūfī (95–161/714–777) was born into a scholarly family with many members who specialized in the transmission of *ḥadīth*. His own father was recognized as one of the scholars and reliable (*thiqa*) *ḥadīth* transmitters of Kufa.⁵⁸ Sufyān al-Thawrī is also recorded as having had siblings and a nephew who were also *ḥadīth* scholars.⁵⁹ In addition to the many references to Sufyān al-Thawrī’s piety and preference for seclusion, sources reveal that Sufyān was a businessman who traveled to trade his goods.⁶⁰ He himself traveled to Yemen and at other times appointed others to travel on his behalf.⁶¹

Three works by Sufyān al-Thawrī are mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm in his *Fihrist: al-Jāmi‘ al-kabīr*, *al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaghīr*, and *Kitāb al-Farā’id*.⁶² Al-Kattānī in his *Risālat al-muṣṭatrifa* (a work that categorizes classical Muslim texts by genre and time period) lists Sufyān al-Thawrī’s *al-Jāmi‘ al-kabīr* as one of the first books published in the Islamic tradition. Sufyān al-Thawrī’s work is also thought to be the first text printed in Kufa. Al-Kattānī writes:

The first publication is the book of Ibn Jurayj published in Mecca on *āthār* and some *tafsīr* reported from ‘Aṭā’, Mujāhid, and other companions of Ibn ‘Abbās. Then the book of Ma‘mar b. Rāshid al-Yamānī in Yemen on the *Sunan* [was published], then the *Muwaṭṭa’* of Mālik, then the *Jāmi‘* of Sufyān al-Thawrī, and the *Jāmi‘* of Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna on *sunan*, *āthār*,

57 Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb b. Sufyān b. Jiwān al-Fasawī l-Farsī (d. 277/890), *al-Ma‘rifā wa-l-tārīkh*, ed. Akram Diyā’ al-‘Umarī, 3 vols. (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 1981), 2:199.

58 Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdimat al-ma‘rifā*, 4:66.

59 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 4:282.

60 Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdimat al-ma‘rifā*, 85, 90, 94 and Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’*, 7:12–23.

61 Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 6:372.

62 Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 277–278.

and parts of *tafsīr*. Hence these were the first five publications during the Islamic [period].⁶³

Sufyān al-Thawrī's other work, *Jāmi' al-ṣaghīr*, was printed by his student, Mihrān b. Abī l-ʿAṭṭār.⁶⁴ Sufyān al-Thawrī was also known for his extensive work in Qur'ānic exegesis. Sufyān is known to have said, "Ask me about the sciences of the Qur'ān and the rites of pilgrimage, for I am knowledgeable of both."⁶⁵

Sufyān al-Thawrī was one of the most prominent figures in *ḥadīth* transmission during his time. He was given the elite rank of "amīr al-mu'mīnīn" in *ḥadīth*; classical sources cite important scholars and critics of *ḥadīth* such as Ibn Ma'in, Ibn 'Uyayna, and many others unanimously as testifying to his prominence as a scholar.⁶⁶

It is significant that 'Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak was one of the most distinguished students of this important figure of the Islamic scholarly tradition and that Sufyān al-Thawrī was also one of Ibn al-Mubārak's most influential teachers. No doubt, Ibn al-Mubārak's ties to Sufyān al-Thawrī had a profound impact on Ibn al-Mubārak's scholarship and thought. In addition to his importance as a scholar of *ḥadīth*, Sufyān al-Thawrī was also distinguished for his piety and *zuhd*, and it is reasonable to assume that this had an impact on Ibn al-Mubārak's own perception of Islamic piety.⁶⁷ It is also noteworthy that both Ibn al-Mubārak and Sufyān al-Thawrī were merchants and practiced a form of *zuhd* which did not involve the rejection of the world in its entirety; this stood in contrast to the more austere ascetic trends also present in their contemporary period.⁶⁸

63 al-Kattānī, *al-Risālat al-mustaṭṭifa*, 9.

64 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 10:328.

65 al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 7:247 and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdimat al-ma'rifa*, 1:117.

66 Cf. al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 9:164 and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdimat al-ma'rifa*, 55 and 66.

67 Josef van Ess describes Sufyān al-Thawrī's asceticism as a moderate form unlike the more austere approaches of others, such as Shāfi' al-Balkhī. He writes that Sufyān engaged in trade, had a family, viewed the wearing of wool as an innovation (*bid'a*), and that he did not like to force excessive hunger upon himself. He was, however, extremely diligent about the lawfulness and purity of the food he consumed. See Josef van Ess, *Theologie Und Gesellschaft Im 2. Und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: Eine Geschichte Des Religiösen Denkens Im Frühen Islam* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), 1:223–224.

68 Alexander Knysch makes an important distinction on the "variety of devotional styles" during the early Islamic period. He focuses on Ibn Adham as an example of an austere form of asceticism practiced by those similar to him whereas Ibn al-Mubārak did not renounce the world per se but simply attachment to it. This will be examined further in

Primary sources include a large number of quotes attributed to Ibn al-Mubārak in praise of his teacher. While the accuracy of each quote cannot be ascertained, the disproportionately larger number of quotes in these sources in which Ibn al-Mubārak mentions Sufyān al-Thawrī seem to indicate the prominent role that Sufyān played in Ibn al-Mubārak’s career. Ibn al-Mubārak is cited as saying, “I do not know of anyone on the face of this earth more knowledgeable than Sufyān al-Thawrī.”⁶⁹ He also said, “If you seek to find a peer to Sufyān, you will not find one.”⁷⁰ Ibn al-Mubārak also praised Sufyān’s unique intellectual abilities, saying, “I have not seen anyone like Sufyān. It is as though he was created for this thing.”⁷¹ Ibn al-Mubārak thus regarded Sufyān as having a talent distinctly appropriate for the transmission of *ḥadīth* and related sciences.

In addition to quotes indicating Ibn al-Mubārak’s reverence for his teacher, Ibn al-Mubārak also notes that he sought out Sufyān al-Thawrī’s opinions when he came across complex legal issues. He is cited as having said, “If I was puzzled about a matter, I would go to Sufyān to ask him and it was as though I had delved into the ocean.”⁷² Another quote attributed to Ibn al-Mubārak indicates that he admitted that there were times when he felt himself to have achieved the same level of knowledge as his teacher and was later proven wrong. Ibn Maʿīn quotes him as saying, “I used to sit with Sufyān al-Thawrī while he was narrating *ḥadīths* and say, ‘There is nothing left of his knowledge except that I have already heard it.’ Then I would sit with him in another gathering and say, ‘I have not heard any of his knowledge.’”⁷³

Ibn al-Mubārak saw Sufyān al-Thawrī not only as a formidable transmitter of *ḥadīth* but also as a figure of admirable piety; we can understand this based on his reference to Sufyān’s supererogatory prayers. This is significant considering that piety or what was often referred to as *zuhd* at this time was one of the qualifying factors on which *ḥadīth* transmitters were affirmed as reliable. Ibn al-Mubārak himself compiled the first *Kitāb al-Zuhd*—the one that has survived until today—and there is evidence that Sufyān al-Thawrī wrote a similar treatise before Ibn al-Mubārak, though this treatise has only survived in segments found in Ibn Maʿīn’s *Taqdima*⁷⁴ and Abū Nuʿaym’s *Ḥilyat*

the forthcoming chapter on Ibn al-Mubārak’s *zuhd*. Cf. Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 18–24.

69 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 9:157.

70 Ibid., 9:156.

71 Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdimat al-maʿrifa*, 56.

72 Ibid., 57.

73 Ibid., 115.

74 Ibid., 86–89.

al-awliyā'.⁷⁵ Ibn al-Mubārak says, regarding Sufyān, "If I wished I could find Sufyān in prayer. If I wished I could have found Sufyān narrating *ḥadīths*. If I wished I could have found Sufyān engrossed in Islamic law (*fiqh*)."⁷⁶

Ibn al-Mubārak is noted by later scholars not only for his high regard for his teacher, Sufyān al-Thawrī, but also for being one of his foremost students. Ibn Ma'in is quoted as saying, "No one's transmission of the *ḥadīths* of Sufyān al-Thawrī resembles his [in the preciseness of their transmission] except Ibn al-Mubārak, Yahyā b. Sa'īd, Wakī', 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī, and Abū Nu'aym." Ibn Ma'in was a crucial figure in the development of the field of *ḥadīth* criticism, and is cited as attesting to Ibn al-Mubārak's accurate representation and transmission of this important figure's *ḥadīths*.

In various instances Ibn al-Mubārak also conveys Sufyān al-Thawrī's ranking of the transmitters of *ḥadīth*. Ibn al-Mubārak says, regarding the reliability of Thawr b. Yazīd, "Sufyān b. Sa'īd was asked about Thawr b. Yazīd al-Shāmī and he said, 'Take from him and beware of his horns,' meaning he was a Qadarī."⁷⁷ Ibn al-Mubārak also quotes Sufyān al-Thawrī's opinion about another transmitter, and says, "Sufyān said, Nahshal b. Majma' al-Ḍabī reported, and he was acceptable [in his rank as a transmitter]."⁷⁸ Also, Ibn al-Mubārak relates that "Sufyān al-Thawrī was asked about Sufyān b. 'Uyayna and he said, 'He is one of a kind.' He was asked about Malik b. Abū Sulaymān and he said, 'He is the scale.'"⁷⁹

Ibn al-Mubārak did not limit himself to conveying Sufyān al-Thawrī's opinions of *ḥadīth* transmitters; in many instances he also relied on Sufyān al-Thawrī to determine his views of *ḥadīth* transmitters. Ibn Abī Ḥātim writes that Ibn al-Mubārak assessed the rank of Sammāk b. Ḥarb as a weak transmitter based on the opinion of Sufyān al-Thawrī.⁸⁰ Ibn al-Mubārak also said, based on the opinion of Sufyān al-Thawrī, "The *ḥuffāz* of the people are three: Ismā'il b. Abū Khālid, 'Abd al-Malik b. Sulaymān, and Yahyā b. Sa'īd al-Anṣārī. The *ḥuffāz* of the Basrans are three: Sulaymān al-Tamīmī, 'Āṣim al-Aḥwal, and Dāwūd b. Abū Hind. And Dāwūd was the most proficient in them in his memory [of *ḥadīths*]."⁸¹ 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan Shaqīq also reported, "I asked Ibn

75 Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, 6:376–377.

76 Muḥammad b. Ismā'il al-Bukhārī, *Tārīkh al-kabīr*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mu'īd Khān, 8 vols. (Hyderabad: Maṭba'at Jam'iyyat Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Uthmāniyya, 1941–58), 4:92.

77 al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-ʿitidāl*, 1:374.

78 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 1:59, 8:495, 10:479.

79 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 9:179. That is, he is the scale by which other narrators and their *ḥadīths* are measured.

80 Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdīm al-ma'rifa*, 82.

81 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 10:394, and Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 1:291.

al-Mubārak, 'Why did you leave the *ḥadīths* of al-Ḥasan b. al-'Amāra?' He said, 'Because Sufyān al-Thawrī and Shu'ba criticized them in my presence so I left his *ḥadīths* based on their words.'⁸²

Sufyān al-Thawrī's foundational role in Ibn al-Mubārak's career as a scholar is significant on a variety of levels. First, it is an example of a teacher-student relationship in which information and legal opinions were passed from one generation of prominent scholars to another generation. Second, we see the methods by which scholars were accepted or rejected from these networks of *ḥadīth* scholars; the methods were based on a general consensus of these prominent scholars who defined the legal, theological, and historical positions of what was first known as the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā'a* and later Sunnī identity.

Just as, in Shī'a thought, the charismatic authority of the *imāms*⁸³ provided continuity to the community, so the authority of the proto-Sunnī network of *ḥadīth* scholars, through the *isnād* system, played a prominent role in shaping the outlook of a later more systematized Sunnī Islam and creating a narrative of continuity from the prophetic period onwards through the system of *isnād*. The successive chain of dominant scholars whose earliest manifestation appeared in *ḥadīth* transmissions and who maintained legitimacy through the support of their claims that they represented, preserved, and transmitted a perspective inherited from the prophetic period through their transmission of *ḥadīth*, played a decisive role in the formation of Sunnī Muslim identity. This becomes increasingly evident as we continue to analyze the circle of Ibn al-Mubārak's teachers and students.

Ibn al-Mubārak's reliance on the generation of prominent scholars was also maintained through the preservation of their works in writing. This use of written material as a primary form of the transmission of knowledge was an important factor in Ibn al-Mubārak's scholarly practice. Abū Dāwūd was quoted as having said, 'I asked Ibn al-Mubārak, 'Whom do you sit with in Khurasān?' He replied, 'I sit with Shu'ba and Sufyān.' Abū Dāwūd said, 'Meaning, I look at their books.'⁸⁴ Ibn al-Mubārak's use of books at a time

82 al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-ʿitidāl*, 1:515, 2:304.

83 Maria Dakake writes, 'The concept of membership in the Shī'ite community that developed in the early 'Abbāsīd period was clearly related to the simultaneously emerging doctrine of the imāmate, in that it demanded more than a mere show of support or walāyah for 'Alid leadership generally. It required knowledge and formal recognition of the "Imām of one's time" and of a specific line of Imāms preceding him. It also demanded absolute obedience to the specific doctrines and teachings of the Imāms.' See Maria Massi Dakake, *The Charismatic Community: Shi'ite Identity in Early Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 178.

84 al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-ʿitidāl*, 2:372 and Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 5:100.

when this was still not widely practiced is often referred to in the classical sources, thus indicating the importance of writing as a part of his scholarship.

Shu'ba b. al-Ḥajjāj (82–160/701–776)

Like Sufyān al-Thawrī, Shu'ba b. al-Ḥajjāj b. al-Ward al-'Atkī was another foundational figure in the field of *ḥadīth* who had a significant influence on Ibn al-Mubārak's scholarship. He was born in 82/701 in a village near Wāṣīt and later settled in Basra. He is also noted to have traveled to Baghdad twice, where he spent a period of time teaching.⁸⁵ He is known to have collected and consolidated the *ḥadīths* from the “two garrison towns,” Basra and Kufa (*jama'at al-ḥadīth al-miṣrayn*).⁸⁶ His importance in the preservation of the *ḥadīths* of this region was summarized in al-Shāfi'ī's words, “Were it not for Shu'ba, *ḥadīth* would not have been known in Iraq.”⁸⁷ He was often compared to Sufyān al-Thawrī—an indication that the two were regarded as scholarly peers and close in the level of accuracy of their *ḥadīth* transmission. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal is quoted as having said:

Shu'ba is the most knowledgeable in *ḥadīths* related to legal rulings. If it were not for Shu'ba, the legal *ḥadīths* would have been lost. There was no one during his time like him in *ḥadīth*, nor better than him in *ḥadīth*. He transmitted from thirty men from the people of Kufa which Sufyān did not transmit from.⁸⁸

The important *ḥadīth* critic, Ibn Ma'in, wrote, “If I hear [*ḥadīth*] from Shu'ba, I do not desire to hear it from Sufyān. If I hear [*ḥadīth*] from Sufyān, I do not wish to hear it from Shu'ba.”⁸⁹ The references above indicate that while later *ḥadīth* critics like Ibn Ḥanbal appear to have preferred Shu'ba over Sufyān, Ibn Ma'in regarded them as equals in scholarship. If Shu'ba made a statement he saw no need to verify it with Sufyān and vice versa. This statement also seems to indicate that their *ḥadīths* generally did not diverge from one another. Otherwise, Ibn Ma'in would have felt the need to analyze the contradictory reports from an equally prominent scholar. Ibn al-Mubārak also compared the two when he stated that he “sits with Shu'ba and Sufyān” in reference to his reliance on their books when he was in Khurasān. Despite the more numerous

85 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdaḍī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 9:256.

86 Ibid., 9:259

87 Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdimat al-ma'rifa*, 127.

88 Ibid., 128.

89 Yaḥyā Ibn Ma'in, *al-Tārīkh*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Nūr Sayf, 4 vols. (Jedda: Jāmi'at al-Malik 'Abd al-'Azīz, 1979), 2:255–256.

references to Sufyān al-Thawrī, it appears that the many comparisons of Shu'ba to this figure indicate that Shu'ba was considered similar or close to the rank of Sufyān al-Thawrī.

Shu'ba was also noted as one of the first scholars to focus on ranking *ḥadīth* transmitters. On Shu'ba and Sufyān al-Thawrī Ibn Abī Ḥātim stated: "Shu'ba was the most knowledgeable person in the [ranking of *ḥadīth*] transmitters, and Sufyān was the possessor of chapters (*abwāb*)."⁹⁰ Based on this statement, it appears that Ibn Ma'īn believed Sufyān al-Thawrī to be more proficient in his mastery of the actual *ḥadīths* while Shu'ba's knowledge of the *isnāds* of the *ḥadīths* and the individual transmitters in these *isnāds* was superior. Ibn Ḥajar also stated that Shu'ba was the first to delve into the study of ranking *ḥadīth* transmitters and was later followed by "al-Qaṭṭān, Aḥmad, and Yahyā."⁹¹ Ibn Ḥanbal went even further to state, "Shu'ba was a nation by himself in this matter. Meaning, he was a resource in the study of *ḥadīth* transmitters, the understanding of *ḥadīths*, and the verification or rejection of [the reliability] of *ḥadīth* transmitters."⁹²

There is further evidence in primary sources that Shu'ba played a decisive role in the approval or rejection of *ḥadīth* transmitters. Ibn Abī Ḥātim includes ninety figures whose reliability was rejected by Shu'ba.⁹³ Ibn al-Mubārak was also cited as conveying Shu'ba's views of various traditionists. Nu'aym b. Ḥammād related that Ibn al-Mubārak cited a transmitter by the name of Ḥammād b. Abī Sulaymān as being one who "would not memorize," meaning he was not fluent in his knowledge of *ḥadīths*.⁹⁴ Ibn al-Mubārak also reported that Shu'ba once stated that another transmitter, Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān, was "skilled in grammar."⁹⁵ In addition, he says he went to Shu'ba to ask about another traditionist and was told, "Beware of 'Abbād b. Kathīr."⁹⁶ Another peer of Shu'ba and Sufyān, Wakī' was cited as having said a prayer for Shu'ba for his contribution to the field of *ḥadīth*.⁹⁷ Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal later noted that "Shu'ba relied on memorization and rarely wrote anything down."⁹⁸ The many references of major *ḥadīth* scholars to other important scholars demonstrate the milieu of interconnectedness that characterized the *ḥadīth*

90 Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdimat al-ma'rifa*, 127.

91 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 4:345.

92 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 9:263.

93 Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdimat al-ma'rifa*, 132–157.

94 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 4:208.

95 Ibid.

96 Ibid., 5:100.

97 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 9:263.

98 Ibid., 9:259.

network at this time. Interestingly, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī stated that Ibn al-Mubārak happened to be in the company of Sufyān al-Thawrī when they heard the news of Shu'ba's death. Sufyān is quoted as having said, "Today *ḥadīth* has died."⁹⁹

‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Awzā’ī (88–157/707–773)

Another important teacher of Ibn al-Mubārak was Abū ‘Amr ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Amr al-Awzā’ī. Al-Awzā’ī traveled to seek knowledge, and spent a major portion of his life in Damascus and his last years in Beirut. He was known as the most important scholar of *fiqh* in Syria during his time. Though he did transmit some *ḥadīths*, mostly in written form, al-Awzā’ī was known as primarily a legal scholar rather than a traditionist.

Ibn al-Nadīm mentions that al-Awzā’ī wrote two works, *Kitāb al-Sunan fī l-fiqh* and *Kitāb al-Masā’il fī l-fiqh*.¹⁰⁰ Ibn Abī Ḥātim also notes several treatises attributed to al-Awzā’ī addressed to rulers and government officials.¹⁰¹ Al-Awzā’ī's centrality in the realm of Islamic law can also be seen in the debates which ensued between himself and other prominent jurists during his time. Abū Yūsuf, a leading student of Abū Ḥanīfa, compiled an entire work entitled *al-Radd ‘alā siyar al-Awzā’ī*, in which he refutes many of al-Awzā’ī's legal positions on a variety of issues. Interestingly, this work was not preserved independently, rather it was included in al-Shāfi‘ī's *Kitāb al-Umm*.¹⁰²

Ibn al-Mubārak's comparison of his two teachers al-Awzā’ī and Sufyān al-Thawrī reveals their teaching methods and the close nature of their relations with their students. Ibn al-Mubārak is cited as having said, "If I were told to choose for this [Muslim] community, I would choose al-Thawrī and al-Awzā’ī. [If I had to choose one] then I would choose al-Awzā’ī because he is the more gregarious of the two men."¹⁰³ Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī makes a similar statement; he said, "I have not seen the likes of two men: al-Awzā’ī and al-Thawrī. As for al-Awzā’ī, he was a man of the people while al-Thawrī was a man of the elite [of scholars]. If I had to choose one for the Muslim community I would choose al-Awzā’ī because he was more accessible. And by God, he was a leader when there is none fit to lead today. If the Muslims were afflicted by a calamity while al-Awzā’ī was among them, you would see

99 Ibid., 9:266.

100 Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 318.

101 Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdimat al-ma’rifā*, 187–202.

102 Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Idrīs b. al-‘Abbās al-Shāfi‘ī, *Kitāb al-Umm*, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Ma’rifā, 1990), 7:352–387.

103 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhib al-tahdhib*, 6:241.

them flock to him.”¹⁰⁴ Ibn Ḥanbal is cited as having related: “al-Thawrī and al-Awzā‘ī entered [the presence of] Mālik and when they left he said, ‘One of them possesses more knowledge than the other but is not fit for leadership. While the other is fit for leadership, meaning al-Awzā‘ī.’”¹⁰⁵ These numerous comparisons seem to depict al-Awzā‘ī as being a more personable and accessible scholar who was easier for the common people to approach. Whereas al-Thawrī seems to have been more aloof; his audience was usually advanced scholars. The comparison between al-Thawrī and al-Awzā‘ī also indicates the prominence of the two and that they were peers in scholarship. Ibn al-Mubārak’s exposure to the most prominent scholarly figures of his time was significant to the development of his career and his own role as a future scholar.

Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna (107–198/721–813)

Ibn ‘Uyayna was yet another important *ḥadīth* scholar with whom Ibn al-Mubārak had a direct connection. Abū Muḥammad Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna b. ‘Umrān Maymūn al-Hilālī was born in Kufa eleven years before Ibn al-Mubārak’s birth. He was raised in Kufa and was said to have gone on the pilgrimage to Mecca frequently during his lifetime. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī writes that he had been on twenty-seven pilgrimages and spent the years from 122/739 to 126/743 residing in Mecca before returning to Kufa.¹⁰⁶ This meant that he was exposed to a vast array of scholars and could have taken *ḥadīth* from them in Mecca during the pilgrimage. One of the important scholars he had access to during the years he lived in Mecca was ‘Amr b. Dīnār,¹⁰⁷ who died in 126/743. During his stay in Mecca Ibn ‘Uyayna was also trained by another key scholar in the field of *ḥadīths*; al-Zuhri. In 123/740 al-Zuhri went to Mecca, and Ibn ‘Uyayna accompanied him and acquired *ḥadīths* from him. Ibn ‘Uyayna also took *ḥadīths* during this period from ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jazarī (d. 127/744), who was quoted as saying in a gathering, “Look at this boy. He asks me and you all do not ask me.” Considering Ibn ‘Uyayna’s youth, this indicates the keenness and talent with which his scholarship of *ḥadīths* was regarded by other scholars. Ibn ‘Uyayna also traveled to Yemen in 150/767 and 152/769 to collect *ḥadīths* from

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid.

106 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 9:176.

107 ‘Amr b. Dīnār Abū Muḥammad al-Athram (d. 126/743) was an early Meccan *ḥadīth* scholar who was regarded as a sound transmitter by a consensus of *ḥadīth* scholars. Cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 8:28–30.

Ma'mar b. Rāshid. Interestingly, Sufyān al-Thawrī's trip to acquire knowledge of *ḥadīths* from this same scholar preceded Ibn 'Uyayna's by only one year.¹⁰⁸

He described his early years seeking knowledge, saying, "I used to go out into the mosque and look over the congregants. If I saw any elderly or scholarly person I used to sit with him." Because he embarked on his quest for knowledge at such a young age, he was able to meet eighty-six members of the generation of Followers (*tābi'in*), and thus his *isnāds* were very short (*'uluww*), which was highly sought after, as it meant that there were fewer transmitters between him and the Prophet.¹⁰⁹ He is cited as having said, "There is not between me and the Companions of the Prophet but a veil," this veil being one other person in the *isnād* of the *ḥadīths* he related.¹¹⁰ In addition to his contribution to *ḥadīth*, Ibn 'Uyayna was also known to have been an important exegete of the Qur'an.

Ibn 'Uyayna moved to Mecca in 163/779 where he spent the remainder of his life.¹¹¹ He became known as an expert transmitter of the *ḥadīths* of al-Zuhri and 'Amr b. Dīnār. 'Alī b. al-Madīnī is quoted as having said, "None of the companions of al-Zuhri is more accurate than Ibn 'Uyayna."¹¹² Ibn Ma'in also said, "Sufyān b. 'Uyayna was the most proficient in [the *ḥadīths*] of 'Amr b. Dīnār and [took] the most *ḥadīths* [from him]."¹¹³ Ibn 'Uyayna also became known as one of the pivotal *ḥadīth* transmitters of the Hijaz. Al-Shāfi'ī is cited as saying, "If it were not for Mālik and Sufyān b. 'Uyayna, who would have preserved the *ḥadīths* of the people of the Arabian Peninsula (Hijaz)?"¹¹⁴

There do not appear to be many references in the classical texts that portray Ibn al-Mubārak's relationship with this particular teacher. Considering the extensive citations found on Ibn al-Mubārak's view of other scholars, it is possible that Ibn al-Mubārak was not as closely associated with Ibn 'Uyayna as he was with some of the others. Nevertheless, he transmitted numerous *ḥadīths* through Ibn 'Uyayna and his study with this scholar who was considered a pillar of *ḥadīth* transmission in the Hijaz region played a significant role in the career of Ibn al-Mubārak.

108 Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 5:497.

109 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 9:174.

110 Ibid., 9:177.

111 Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, 7:307.

112 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 9:178.

113 Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 4:119.

114 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Ādāb al-Shāfi'ī wa manāqibihī*, ed. 'Abd al-Ghanī 'Abd al-Khāliq (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2003), 1:157.

‘Abdallāh b. Lahi’a

Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Abdallāh b. Lahi’a b. ‘Uqba al-Ḥaḍramī (97–174/715–790) is a controversial figure in the history of *ḥadīth* transmission. He began his career young and demonstrated exceptional aptitude in the collection of *ḥadīth*. Al-Dhahabī states that he traveled extensively and was among those who wrote *ḥadīths*, as opposed to those who relied on transmission through memory.¹¹⁵ After spending his early years traveling, he eventually settled in Egypt, where he was sought out for the *ḥadīths* he had compiled and written down over the years. Abū Ja’far al-Manṣūr appointed him as judge (*qāḍī*) of Egypt in the year 155/771 and ‘Abdallāh b. Lahi’a held this position until 164/780.¹¹⁶

Ibn Lahi’a is generally regarded as a weak transmitter and is even heavily censured by several important *ḥadīth* critics. Al-Bayhaqī is quoted as having said, “The people of *ḥadīth* have agreed by consensus on the weakness of Ibn Lahi’a and [have agreed] to abandon the *ḥadīths* to which he is a lone transmitter.”¹¹⁷ Ibn Ma’in wrote, “He is not strong,”¹¹⁸ and also, “[One] cannot use his *ḥadīths* as a proof.”¹¹⁹ In another noteworthy critique of his accuracy Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Abū Zur’a al-Rāzī are cited as having said, “His case is problematic. He wrote *ḥadīths* for [the purpose of] recognition.”¹²⁰

Ibn Lahi’a was criticized for three main reasons. First, he was not consistent about reciting *ḥadīths* only from his personal copies of recorded *ḥadīths*. Ya’qūb b. Sufyān al-Fasawī¹²¹ states that initially Ibn Lahi’a read his *ḥadīth* collection from his own manuscripts and his students wrote them down. However, the level of mastery and scholastic experience of those who attended his gatherings varied. After a while, it is reported that Ibn Lahi’a used the manuscripts of others along with his and this resulted in mistakes in his transmission of *ḥadīth*, due to the lack of expertise of some of those who did not accurately record Ibn Lahi’a’s *ḥadīths*.

Second, Ibn Lahi’a is accused of altering chains of transmission to omit weak transmitters from them (*tadlīs*). Ibn al-Mubārak himself is cited as having attested to this. One of Ibn al-Mubārak’s students, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān

115 al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a’lām al-nubalā’*, 6:298.

116 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a’yān*, 3:83.

117 al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmā’ wa-l-lughāt*, 1:284.

118 al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-‘itidāl*, 2:476.

119 Yahyā b. Ma’in, *Ma’rifat al-rijāl: al-tārikh Ibn Ma’in*, ed. Muḥammad Kāmil Qaṣṣār, 2 vols. (Damascus: Mujaḥma’ al-Lughāt al-‘Arabiyya, 1985), 1:67.

120 Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdimat al-ma’rifā*, 5:147.

121 Abū Yūsuf Ya’qūb b. Sufyān al-Fasawī l-Farsī (d. 277/890) had the rank of *ḥāfiẓ* in *ḥadīth* transmission and is included as a sound transmitter of Ibn Ḥibbān. Cf. al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2:582.

b. Maḥdī, wrote, “Ibn Lahi’a wrote a manuscript that included [the *isnād*] ‘Umar b. Shu’ayb reported.’ I read this to Ibn al-Mubārak who looked it up in his own book and read it as, Ishāq b. Abī Farwa reported to ‘Umar b. al-Shu’ayb.” This demonstrates that Ibn al-Mubārak was aware that Ibn Lahi’a was not reliable as a *ḥadīth* transmitter and that he engaged in *tadlīs*. Removing weak transmitters from an *isnād* was a known form of *tadlīs*; those who engaged in this form of deception wanted to strengthen their chains of transmission and hence increase their prestige and standing as *ḥadīth* transmitters. Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s critique, mentioned earlier, supports this claim that Ibn Lahi’a used to transmit *ḥadīth* out of a desire for recognition, as opposed to acting for the sake of God. Ibn Ḥibbān is also quoted as having said, “I read through his transmissions and I found that he used to engage in *tadlīs* by manipulating weak transmitters in chains of *ḥadīths*.”¹²²

Finally, it appears that Ibn Lahi’a’s only advantage as a *ḥadīth* transmitter was his having recorded his *ḥadīths* in writing. However, at a later stage in his life, Ibn Lahi’a abandoned this advantage by burning all of his books. All traditions reported by Ibn Lahi’a after this incident are unanimously considered unreliable. Al-Ḥākim is quoted as having said, “He did not intend to lie. Rather, he recited from his memory after the burning of his books and made mistakes.”¹²³

Ibn al-Mubārak is cited as having said, when Ibn Lahi’a was mentioned in front of him, “Ibn Lahi’a was doubted [as an accurate transmitter], meaning his faults were exposed.” Despite this, Ibn al-Mubārak is reported to be one of the few transmitters of Ibn Lahi’a’s *ḥadīths* whose transmission was reliable. Ibn Maḥdī is quoted as having said, “I do not rely on anything I have heard from the *ḥadīth* of Ibn Lahi’a except what I hear from Ibn al-Mubārak and those around him.”¹²⁴ ‘Abd al-Ghanī l-Azdī is cited as having said, “If [any of the following] “‘Abdallāhs” (*‘abādila*) report on the authority of Ibn Lahi’a then it is a sound [*ḥadīth*]: Ibn al-Mubārak, Ibn Wahb, al-Muqri’, and al-Qa’nabī.”¹²⁵ Exceptions are made, in part, for these figures because they took their *ḥadīths* from Ibn Lahi’a before he burned his books. Ibn Ḥibbān wrote, “Our colleagues say: ‘Who heard from him before he burned his books, like the ‘Abdallāhs, then his transmission is sound.’”¹²⁶ Another important distinction mentioned by *ḥadīth* critics is that Ibn al-Mubārak did not accept all of Ibn Lahi’a’s *ḥadīths* uncritically. Abū Zur’a wrote that Ibn

122 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 5:379.

123 Ibid., 5:376.

124 al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-ʿitidāl*, 2:476.

125 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 5:378.

126 al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-ʿitidāl*, 2:482.

al-Mubārak used to verify the *ḥadīths* he heard from Ibn Lahī’a by analyzing “their foundations,” most likely meaning the *isnād* of the *ḥadīth* itself and whether the *matn* meets the criterion of *ḥadīth* critics. Abū Zur’a is cited as saying, “The transmission of all from Ibn Lahī’a is the same except for Ibn al-Mubārak and Ibn Wahb who used to follow its foundations.”¹²⁷

Ibn al-Mubārak’s transmission from Ibn Lahī’a reveals a great deal of important information about the nature of Ibn al-Mubārak’s methodology as a *ḥadīth* transmitter. The combination of reports above demonstrates that Ibn al-Mubārak was aware of Ibn Lahī’a’s weakness as a transmitter and yet he found some of Ibn Lahī’a’s reports useful, provided they were analyzed critically and selectively. Transmitters often employed this method—finding variant chains of transmission for a tradition that would be otherwise weak on its own, yet was strengthened by multiple reports making them what, in later books of *ḥadīth* methodology, became known as *ḥasan li-ghayrihi*, or *ṣaḥīḥ li-ghayrihi*.

The fact that Ibn al-Mubārak’s interaction and transmission of *ḥadīth* from a weak source like Ibn Lahī’a is extant in classical texts and biographical dictionaries is quite significant. Had there been a conspiracy to construct—in some later period—the figure of Ibn al-Mubārak as a prominent Muslim scholar and *ḥadīth* transmitter, the inclusion of such details would have been problematic and therefore avoided or excised. Had there similarly been an attempt to whitewash his biography, it would have also been reasonable for Ibn al-Mubārak’s connection to Ibn Lahī’a to have been expunged from the classical texts.

This point brings to mind the significant observations made by Harald Motzki in his analysis of the *Muṣannaḥ* of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī. This issue will be revisited in depth in this study when the entirety of the information available on Ibn al-Mubārak’s teachers and students is examined to determine the nature of *isnād* networks in the second/eighth century. Finally, the overwhelming majority of *ḥadīths* Ibn al-Mubārak reports from Ibn Lahī’a appear in his *Kitāb al-Zuhd* or *Kitāb al-Jihād*, which are essentially books on Islamic piety. It appears likely that the acceptability of using weak *ḥadīths* in books on virtuous deeds (*faḍā’il al-a’māl*) is a position that manifests in Ibn al-Mubārak’s methodology of *ḥadīth* usage and transmission, as it also does in the works of later *ḥadīth* scholars. The use of weak *ḥadīths* was debated among subsequent generations of *ḥadīth* scholars; those who advocated the permissibility of their usage stipulated three conditions to allow for their use. The weak *ḥadīth* in question must encourage or confirm acts already considered virtuous according to the standards of Islamic piety. In addition,

127 Ibid., 2:477.

the weak *ḥadīth* should not be so weak that scholars believe it was forged and the individual undertaking the virtuous acts should do so for divine reward without believing in the veracity of the *ḥadīth* in an absolute sense.¹²⁸ While not explicitly mentioned by Ibn al-Mubārak or his contemporaries, it is not unlikely that many of these ideas had already been developing and were informally practiced in the periods leading up to the greater systematization of *ḥadīth* methodology.

Prominent Students of Ibn al-Mubārak

Ibn Maʿīn

Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn b. ʿAwn al-Ghaṭafānī (d. 233/847) was probably one of the most influential students of Ibn al-Mubārak. He was a crucial figure in the development of the field of *ḥadīth* criticism, and his success as a scholar contributed to the continuation of Ibn al-Mubārak's own work and its incorporation into the work of other traditionists. In addition to his efforts to formulate a systematic methodology for determining strong and weak transmitters, Ibn Maʿīn also served as a link between Ibn al-Mubārak and many of the traditionists who became known as the compilers of the canonical texts of the Sunnī *ḥadīth* tradition, namely Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, and Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī. In addition, Ibn Maʿīn was a teacher of other future prominent scholars of *ḥadīth* such as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī, and Muḥammad b. Saʿd Kātib al-Wāqidi.

Ibn Maʿīn inherited a large sum of money from his father who had worked as an ʿAbbāsīd government official. He dedicated the entirety of his inheritance to fund his pursuit of *ḥadīths*, which required extensive travel during his early life. In addition to Ibn al-Mubārak, Ibn Maʿīn collected the works of other important *ḥadīth* scholars such as Sufyān b. ʿUyayna, Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ, Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān, and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī. He eventually settled in Baghdad during a time when the city had gained prominence as an important center of *ḥadīth* transmission.

Though he was known to have collected and written down a great number of *ḥadīths*, Ibn Maʿīn only transmitted a small number of these, out of excessive precaution. Ibn Maʿīn's essential role in the field of *ḥadīth* sciences was that of a *ḥadīth* critic. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal is cited as having said, "Ibn Maʿīn was the most knowledgeable among us in the [ranks] of *ḥadīth* transmitters."¹²⁹ His primary contribution to *ḥadīth* studies were his biographical dictionaries that ranked thousands of transmitters according to a rigorous methodology of *jarḥ wa-taʿdīl*, which he was an important proponent of developing.

128 That is, one acting on a weak *ḥadīth* is aware that this *ḥadīth* may not be accurate.

129 al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 1:430 and Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 11:284.

Though Ibn Maʿīn was an important developer of the field of *ḥadīth* criticism, his work built upon the rudimentary systems developed by his predecessors, such as ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak. I examine Ibn al-Mubārak’s method of ranking *ḥadīth* transmitters more closely in the upcoming sections of this study.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī

‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī b. Ḥasan b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Anbarī (some say the *mawla* of al-Azdī) Abū Saʿīd al-Baṣrī l-Ḥāfiẓ al-Imām al-‘Alam (d. 198/813), transmitted *ḥadīth* both to and from Ibn al-Mubārak. He was also one of the foremost students of Sufyān al-Thawrī. Al-Athram reports that he wished that people would ask him for *ḥadīths* from others because of all the people who pursued him to seek *ḥadīths* he received from Sufyān. Khalilī wrote that, “he was an *imām* without argument and [Sufyān] al-Thawrī died in his house.” He was known for the strength of his *ḥadīth* transmissions and for delving into matters of jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Al-Shāfiʿī said of him, “I do not know of a peer of his in this world.”

Ibn al-Mubārak and the *Ḥadīth* Networks in the Second/Eighth Century

The last decade has seen a variety of important studies on biographical dictionaries, studies that shed light on the role of the *ḥadīth* transmitters mentioned and their network of scholars. A number of secondary sources, such as Wadad al-Qadi’s article “Biographical Dictionaries as the Scholars’ Alternative History of the Muslim Community,”¹³⁰ outline some of the major works in classical texts and highlight the importance of these resources to the formation of the Islamic scholarly tradition and the central role of the generational organization (*ṭabaqāt*) of scholastic histories found in the vast array of volumes on prosopographical networks.¹³¹ Other studies such as Recep Senturk’s *Narrative Social Structure* demonstrate that these early networks of scholars were more sophisticated than previously assumed. Harald Motzki used the *isnāds*

130 Wadad al-Qadi, “Biographical Dictionaries as the Scholars’ Alternative History of the Muslim Community,” in *Organizing Knowledge: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth Century Islamic World*, ed. Gerhard Endress (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 23–75.

131 For valuable information on the evolution and contents of Muslim biographical dictionaries, see Abd al-Aziz Duri and Lawrence I. Conrad, *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983) and Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

and *matns* to analyze traditions and found support for the claim of hundreds of volumes of biographical dictionaries. He established that the patterns of wording with the bodies of *ḥadīths* (*matn*) correlate with unique patterns in the wording and style of the transmitters in their *isnāds* and this points to a genuine process of transmission. His detailed analysis of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī’s *Muṣannaf*, which dates well over a century before Schacht claimed that *ḥadīth* were fabricated *en masse* by jurists, indicates that historical evidence suggests that what became known as the revisionist theories on the development of *ḥadīth* literature needs to be revisited with closer examinations of classical sources.

Motzki also addresses questions regarding whether it is possible that the patterns of correlation between *isnād* and *matn* themselves could have been fabricated. He states:

The intention of the *isnād* system was to ensure reliability of the transmission process. The basic value linked with it was that I have to name the informant from whom I received the information ... the whole scholarly community as a whole must have watched to ensure that this norm was not violated. This does not exclude that forgery could happen but it seems unlikely in that it happened at a huge scale in scholarly circles, not to speak of *muḥaddithūn*. If the scholarly *isnād* system was only to feign reliability, then the whole system of validating traditions by *isnāds* would have become absurd ... Who had to be deceived? Other Muslim scholars? They must have been aware of the pointlessness and vanity of all the efforts to maintain high standards of transmission, if forgery of *isnāds* was part and parcel of the daily scholarly practice.¹³²

Assuming that the patterns found in *isnād-cum-matn* analyses are fabricated is further problematized when one considers the sheer extent of the volumes of classical biographical literature that relate information that both affirms and criticizes tens of thousands of figures over a range of time and geographic centers.

If we isolate one such work, such as al-Mizzī’s *Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmā’ al-rijāl* (thirty-four volumes, later abridged by Ibn Ḥajar as *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb fī rijāl al-ḥadīth* into twelve volumes), which closely examines the *ṭabaqāt* or generations of transmitters of traditions, we see that each biographical entry begins with a list of men whom an individual transmitted from and vice versa. We find that each of the dates, geographical locations, and references to the meetings of these men and women do indeed

132 Harald Motzki, “Dating Muslim Traditions: A Survey,” *Arabica* 52, no. 2 (2005), 235.

match up, as also demonstrated by recent research that relies on these biographical dictionaries.¹³³ It would be quite complicated to forge this type of information consistently and on such a massive scale. In relation to this Ahmed El Shamsy writes:

If one accepts the hypothesis that the thousands of Hadith that form the basis of classical Islamic law are the product of deliberate falsification, one can only dismiss wholesale that the vast body of Islamic legal and historiographical literature that transmits, analyzes, and uses this material as if it were (at least potentially) genuine. From such a perspective, the classical literature embodies a concerted effort to conceal the true nature and origin of “Islamic” law. This is a bold claim implying as it does that Muslim scholarship is in some fundamental and unique way dishonest and must be decoded by “objective” outsiders. The factual basis of this claim has been challenged by numerous critical studies, which have shown that indiscriminate rejection of the authenticity of the entire Hadith corpus is as misguided as its categorical acceptance.¹³⁴

All of this is significant to our study of ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak because of the crucial role we see that *ḥadīth* and the specialists of *ḥadīth* played in the career of this figure. Many of the reports cited earlier indicate that Ibn al-Mubārak spent a significant part of his life traveling to the various geographic centers of *ḥadīth* transmission to collect *ḥadīth*. In addition, references to Ibn al-Mubārak indicate, as discussed earlier, that he was a great proponent of writing down *ḥadīth*, even though this was still a disputed practice in the second/eighth century. Thus, in the career of ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak we see the consolidation of the many disparate *ḥadīths* from various geographic centers in the scholarship of this figure, who was able to accumulate massive volumes of *ḥadīth* literature through his use of writing at a time when this was not yet common practice, and spread this collection to the students who came to study with him.

Ibn al-Mubārak’s ability to collect *ḥadīths* in this way from such diverse geographic regions leads us to ask how he knew where to go in the first place? Is it possible for just anyone to claim an *isnād* to the Prophet Muḥammad and

133 Harald Motzki utilizes these sources extensively in his work. His analysis of the *ḥadīth* does not lead him to the conclusion that the *isnāds* and individuals in the biographical dictionaries were fabrications *en masse*. Rather, he argues (in his *Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence*) that the patterns in classical sources of *ḥadīth*, such as the *Muṣannaf* of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī, indicate a genuine process of transmission. Of course, this is a separate matter from the accuracy of the actual reports.

134 El Shamsy, *Canonization*, 7–8.

sayings attributed to him? Motzki's comments quoted above, coupled with studies on the vast resources of biographical dictionaries, such as al-Qadī's work, are important to this question. The assumption that *isnāds* were later fabrications by those who wished to assert the authenticity of false reports is challenged by the bulk of the material in classical sources which corroborate each other and the logical problem this poses; if scholars created *isnāds* to conceal false reports, who were they attempting to hide from? Was it other scholars? If the scholars were aware that the entire *isnād* system was a fraud, then would not the very attempt to conceal false reports be undermined by this communal awareness? If on the other hand, some *isnāds* were genuine attempts to trace the transmission of reports while some were false reports attempting to conceal fabricated *ḥadīths*, there would, reasonably speaking, have to have been a system set in place by scholars to identify the false and true *isnāds*. This is the only reasonable way that the *isnād* system would work to begin with. Surely, scholars who were clever enough to keep track of non-fraudulent *isnāds* would also have developed a system to verify them. If this system of verification is not that developed by those who specialized in *rijāl* criticism, on which extensive volumes are extant in the Arabic classical sources, then what system was developed and on what basis did it reject the claims of books on *ḥadīth* criticism, claims that assert their role in verifying *isnāds*? These are substantial logical problems that arise by many of the premises advanced by revisionists who have theorized that *ḥadīths* were later fabrications with false *isnāds*.

Many of the scholars with whom Ibn al-Mubārak met, according to numerous entries on him, came from diverse geographic areas, and there is indirect evidence in these reports that indicates that these scholars were aware of other important scholars in various other regions. For instance, biographical dictionaries report that Ibn al-Mubārak spent a period of time in Syria under the tutelage of al-Awzā'ī. In this report we see a reference to al-Awzā'ī's initial disdain for Abū Ḥanīfa, about whom he asks Ibn al-Mubārak with skepticism, "O Khurasānī, who is this man who came from Kufa?"¹³⁵ In this context, it is significant that al-Awzā'ī was aware of Abū Ḥanīfa's work in Iraq. Throughout the literature citing aspects of Ibn al-Mubārak's life and scholarship we see numerous similar reports which indicate that the scholars of Ibn al-Mubārak's period were informed of each other's work, and we know that certain individuals in this network of scholars that stretched from Egypt to Transoxiana were commonly accepted. How did these scholars communicate with each other? What was it that determined one's membership in this circle of scholars? These are two important ques-

135 Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, 32:400–401.

tions that must be examined in order to understand this group of influential individuals and their greater impact on the formative period of the Sunnī Islamic tradition.

Based on the sources cited from Ibn al-Mubārak’s life in particular and the norms of the second/eighth-century Muslim world in general, it appears that the first question regarding the means of communication between geographically diverse but ideologically like-minded scholars was based on two main factors: the annual pilgrimage to Mecca and scholars who traveled in search of *ḥadīths* (*al-riḥlāt fi ṭalab al-‘ilm*). The annual pilgrimage to Mecca was a meeting point for scholars all over the Muslim world where ideas, *ḥadīths*, and new developments in the Islamic sciences were shared. The reports regarding Ibn al-Mubārak indicate that the annual pilgrimage played a prominent role in his life—he not only went to Mecca once to fulfill his lifetime obligation, but he performed the pilgrimage numerous times throughout his life. One report indicates that he went on the pilgrimage every other year. Another report refers to Sufyān al-Thawrī, Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyāḍ, and Ibn al-Mubārak being in Mecca together. Other reports cited earlier discuss events that occurred with Ibn al-Mubārak while he was on the pilgrimage to Mecca. For example, one report states that Ibn al-Mubārak came across a poor family while traveling to Mecca and he gave them the provisions he had, and only kept enough for himself to return home.¹³⁶ Another report cites Ibn al-Mubārak’s financial support of his companions traveling with him on the pilgrimage. While we are unable to determine to what extent these reports are true and to what extent they are merely remnants of later hagiography, the attribution of numerous reports related to Ibn al-Mubārak’s many pilgrimages to Mecca indicates that regardless of the veracity of the details of the reports, the references and anecdotes consistently occur during his travels to Mecca and this would seem to indicate that Ibn al-Mubārak frequently undertook the pilgrimage.

The frequency of Ibn al-Mubārak’s pilgrimages to Mecca is significant to the understanding of his role as both a scholar and student of *ḥadīth*. Ibn al-Mubārak’s regular travels to the center, where Muslims from all parts of the world came together, enabled him to record *ḥadīths* he would not otherwise have heard and to disseminate the large numbers of *ḥadīths* he was known to have written.

In addition to the annual pilgrimage, individual scholars who undertook travel for the sake of pursuing knowledge were another important source of the spread of knowledge. This had become so common among aspiring scholars of *ḥadīth* that the phrase *riḥla fi ṭalab al-‘ilm* was coined specifically

¹³⁶ Al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ, *Tartīb al-madārik*, 3:43–45.

to denote this type of travel. An overwhelming number of reports in the classical sources on Ibn al-Mubārak indicate that he excelled at this type of travel. Ibn Ḥanbal is quoted as having said, “I know of no one during his era who has traveled more in pursuit of knowledge.”

Suleiman Mourad’s work on Ḥasan al-Baṣrī brings to mind some related questions regarding the depiction of the life of Ibn al-Mubārak.¹³⁷ In summary, Mourad argues that it was later Muslims who created an image of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī as a pious figure, that in fact these sources did not accurately reflect the status of this individual during his lifetime. While Mourad’s research serves to remind us of the importance of taking individual reports in classical texts with some reservations, its more general claim of the “formation” of a figure of such high regard by later apocryphal narratives leaves some important questions unanswered and leads us to question how this relates to our own study of Ibn al-Mubārak.

In his detailed analysis of the written material on Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Mourad fails to address a problem posed by the way Ḥasan al-Baṣrī is presented in the *ḥadīth* sources. Namely, despite the unanimous praise of this figure throughout the classical texts, the sources on *ḥadīth* criticism are in agreement that Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was a poor transmitter of *ḥadīth*. If we accept the assertion that there was a conspiracy to eulogize this figure to the point of exaggeration and fabrication, then what accounts for this negative view of his abilities as a *ḥadīth* transmitter? In other words, if we accept the author’s premise that communal pressures led to an aggrandizement of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī in the classical texts, then would it not follow that the biographical dictionaries documenting *ḥadīth* transmitters are exceptionally resistant to this type of pressure that other Islamic works succumbed to? If so, then how is it that these same *ḥadīth* sources still corroborate with the other sources in affirming Ḥasan al-Baṣrī’s exceptional piety? Mourad’s premise does not sufficiently address this point and we are compelled to reexamine some of the assumptions of the skeptical approach in regard to what seems to be the overstated claim of the unreliability of classical texts in their depictions of early figures.¹³⁸

This is not to say that biographical entries are devoid of fabrications, exaggerations, and false anecdotes. Certainly, caution and a healthy skepticism

137 Cf. Suleiman A. Mourad, *Early Islam Between Myth and History: al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110H/728 CE) and the Formation of his Legacy in Classical Islamic Scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

138 For a related study of the challenges in determining the authenticity of theological works attributed to Ḥasan al-Baṣrī see Feryal Salem, “Freewill, *Qadar*, and *Kasb* in the Epistle of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī to ‘Abd al-Malik,” in *Muslim World* 104, nos. 1–2 (2014): 198–219.

of what may be false reports, especially when dealing with figures that are legendary subjects of hagiographical material, are essential for critical scholarship. However, consistent praise of a figure in historical texts would indicate that he must have been regarded as a praiseworthy individual by the community in a general sense, while it is the details of these same reports that are questionable in terms of veracity.

Furthermore, we are also obliged to consider another question: why do the same sources that praise one figure, also criticize or have a far less supportive approach to other historical figures? Even if one assumes the positive depiction of Muslim historical figures to be false, the very choice to depict Ḥasan al-Baṣrī rather than, for example, Wāṣil b. al-‘Aṭā’ as a positive figure is significant in and of itself in that it represents a communal bias toward one figure as opposed to another by the Muslim community. Rather than a conspiracy in which a diverse array of classical sources collaborate in falsely portraying the importance of this figure, it would appear more reasonable to assume that he must have been regarded as a figure of importance in the first place. Thus, these reports as a whole come together to form a general picture of how later generations viewed this figure and what his life must have been like in a general sense that would have elicited this highly positive historical portrayal that would have been prone to later additions. By analogy, we can also make the claim that the generality of the reports about Ibn al-Mubārak combine to form a consistent picture of this figure as a founding scholar of the early formative period of the Sunnī Islamic tradition.

Thus, the combination of the many reports about various *ḥadīth* scholars in biographical dictionaries and classical sources on *ḥadīth* criticism also depict a network of scholars who recognized each other despite geographic distances and controlled the passing of their evolving scholarship to the next *ṭabaqa* or generation of scholars. The inclusion and recognition of membership into this network of scholars who primarily transmitted religious scholarship in the form of “*ḥadīths*” defined what it meant to be a part of the early proto-Sunnī community, *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā‘a*, as demonstrated by Scott Lucas in his research in *Constructive Critics: Hadith Literature and the Articulation of Sunnī Islam*.¹³⁹

Lucas’ work places Ibn al-Mubārak as a scholar of *ḥadīth* within the larger framework of Islamic scholarship and enables us to see his importance as a contributor to the formation of what eventually became known as the Sunnī tradition. He gives an overview of previous studies that attempted to define the Sunnī tradition through various categories and then expounds on the

139 Scott Lucas, *Constructive Critics, Ḥadīth Literature, and the Articulation of Sunnī Islam: The Legacy of the Generation of Ibn Sa‘d, Ibn Ma‘īn, and Ibn Ḥanbal* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

general neglect of *ḥadīth* scholars and scholarship, presumably due to the influence of the ideas of Goldziher and Schacht on the mass fabrication of *ḥadīths*, ideas which were widely accepted until the recent period. Lucas concludes that this neglect has led to an incomplete understanding of the evolution of the Sunnī tradition.

Lucas writes that attempts to define Sunnī Islam have revolved primarily around two approaches. The first is one focused on theology and heresiography, as undertaken by Montgomery Watt, Fazlur Rahman, and Josef van Ess.¹⁴⁰ While Watt relies heavily on classical sources by Muslim scholars who focus on sectarianism to define Sunnī Islam, Rahman regards Sunnī Islam as being primarily a reaction to the Muʿtazilī and Shīʿī trends until it takes its fully developed form under the theological reasoning of al-Ashʿarī. Van Ess too focuses on sectarianism in the early Islamic period and links many of the major *ḥadīth* figures such as Sufyān al-Thawrī to their theological stances despite the fact that this was not by any means the most important achievement of their scholarly careers by which they were known.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, *ḥadīth* scholars and their role in the early period are virtually ignored because many of the major *ḥadīth* scholars were not figures known for their sectarian stances or were not listed in classical works on the early sects and their adherents.¹⁴² While this is not to say that theology was not an important factor which defined the Sunnī tradition, an examination of the network of *ḥadīth* scholarship of the early period, as presented by Lucas, reflects that this was not the primary element by which adherents of what was known as the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa* bonded. In fact the title “Sunnī” itself is derived from the word *sunna*, which Muslim society viewed as being preserved in great part through the *ḥadīths* of the Prophet.

The second approach Scott Lucas mentions is that which focuses on the formation of Sunnī Islam through the development of Islamic law in the third/ninth century. Citing Schacht’s influential work which uses this approach, Lucas argues that this method of outlining Sunnī Islam is also flawed in its lack of recognizing the role of *ḥadīth* and its transmission in the development of the Sunnī tradition. The four main premises of Schacht’s work are that the bulk of *ḥadīths* were mainly circulated after the time of al-Shāfiʿī, most legal traditions came about in the middle of the second/eighth century, there is a backward growth of *isnāds* in which the authority they claim increases up to the time of the Prophet, and the evidence found

140 Ibid., 2–4.

141 Cf. van Ess, *Theologie*, 1:221–228.

142 Lucas, *Constructive Critics*, 4.

does not date *ḥadīth* traditions earlier than the first/seventh century.¹⁴³ Lucas argues that the methodology through which Schacht arrived at these sweeping conclusions is problematic due his use of sources not directly related to the field of the *ḥadīth* sciences to undermine the claim to authenticity of these *ḥadīths*, while ignoring other *ḥadīth* sources which are not only important contributions to the genre of *ḥadīth* works but were also contemporary to or predated al-Shāfi‘ī, upon whom Schacht so heavily relied to make his vast conclusions. Lucas writes:

While it is logical to use treatises by a few prominent scholars in order to understand their individual styles of legal reasoning, it is a grave error to ignore entirely the evidence present in *ḥadīth* collections that were compiled simultaneously with and prior to the lives of these jurists. How is it possible that a generation or two of scholars invented tens of thousands of *ḥadīths* between the lifetimes of al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/820) and Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855)? The only way to ignore this question is to blind oneself to the 30,000 *ḥadīth Musnad* of the latter and adhere to the works of scholars who are rarely if ever included among lists of the great compilers and critics of *ḥadīth*. Indeed, the thought of espousing such a theory of *ḥadīth* on the basis of a few books that have never been considered part of the genre of *ḥadīth* literature seems to be risky at best, and methodologically unsound at worst.¹⁴⁴

This problematic approach is further exacerbated by the fact that Schacht ignored another genre of classical sources that undermine many of the assumptions he makes, namely that of biographical dictionaries. As discussed earlier, biographical dictionaries are so vast in their volumes, sources, and geographic origins while also corroborating the claims made regarding the identities of individuals in *isnāds* of *ḥadīths*, that it is difficult to argue that *isnāds* and the whole *isnād* system upon which books, scholarly connections, and standards of measuring the reliability of reports are based are all an elaborate fabrication or conspiracy. As argued by Motzki in his article “Dating Muslim Traditions,” regardless of whether a *ḥadīth* is in fact an accurate articulation of the words of the Prophet, the overwhelming amount of material in the classical biographic dictionaries suggest that the *isnāds* do in fact generally reflect a genuine transmission process rather than a later arbitrary association of these *isnāds*

143 Ibid., 6.

144 Ibid., 6–7.

with the body of *ḥadīths* as previously assumed.¹⁴⁵ In relation to this Lucas also writes:

The earliest extant biographical dictionary of religious scholars is *Kitāb ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* of Muḥammad b. Saʿd (d. 230/845), a younger contemporary of the jurist al-Shāfiʿī, upon whom Schacht relied so heavily upon his theories. Ibn Saʿd's book is a veritable history of thousands of *ḥadīth* transmitters and is arranged both geographically and chronologically. The basic unit of time is the *ṭabaqa*, or generation, and Ibn Saʿd groups scholars according to their primary city or region of residence, generation by generation, back to the earliest generation of Muslims, the *ṣaḥāba*, or Companions of the Prophet. One would have to consider the entire multi-volume book to be a forgery in order to subscribe to Schacht's theses. Although Schacht cites the Leiden edition of Ibn Saʿd's book in his bibliography, it is clear that he rejected the veracity of the vast majority of its contents when he postulated his theories concerning *ḥadīth* transmission.¹⁴⁶

Finally, Lucas points to Schacht's reliance on legal *ḥadīths* to form another premise of his argument on the circulation of *ḥadīths* by jurists in the third/ninth century and observes that the overwhelming majority of *ḥadīths* are not related to Islamic law. This is significant in our study of Ibn al-Mubārak as well, since the classical sources demonstrate that most early forms of knowledge were transmitted in the form of "*ḥadīth*." I use quotations here because the technical definition of *ḥadīth* differs from our common usage of the term *ḥadīth*. When we refer to *ḥadīth* today, we often mean quotes attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad. However, for early scholars *ḥadīth* were "sayings" that could have originated from the Prophet, but also from the early generations of Muslims.

Indeed, as we see in our closer examination of the two most important extant books attributed to Ibn al-Mubārak, the *Kitāb al-Zuhd* and the *Kitāb al-Jihād*, a great many of the *ḥadīths* included in these books are not legal in nature, nor does he claim that they are sayings of the Prophet. A significant number of *ḥadīths* transmitted in these texts are sayings attributed to the Companions of the Prophet and their followers. All of these are labeled as "*ḥadīth*" by *ḥadīth* scholars but are classified differently based on whether they are cited as sayings of the Prophet or not.

145 Motzki, "Dating Muslim Traditions," 247–253.

146 Lucas, *Constructive Critics*, 7–8.

Ahmed El Shamsy uses the context of Islamic law to challenge the hypotheses that *ḥadīth* were forged and circulated by jurists; he convincingly argues that among legal jurists the dominant role of *ḥadīth* in the second/eighth century was not due to their invention of these *ḥadīths*, but rather their integration of *ḥadīths* into Islamic law due to their new significance. He asserts that the primacy of *ḥadīth* in the derivation of Islamic law is in large part a result of al-Shāfi‘ī’s new methodology of legal hermeneutics. El Shamsy writes:

Beyond being essentially unimaginative, factually dubious, and methodologically unpalatable, the conclusion that the discourse of Islamic law was born out of the forgery of Hadith is also quite unnecessary. The principle of Occam’s razor encourages us to prefer the simplest theory that adequately explains the known facts. The hypothesis that untold hundreds of Muslim scholars over several centuries participated in a vast and successful conspiracy to conceal the real origin and nature of legal discourse does not fare particularly well in this test. The explanation that I propose in this book is far more straightforward and I believe convincing: the reason for the “sudden” integration of Hadith into law from the second/eighth century onwards lies not in their invention, but rather in their new significance and role—that is, their canonization. This explanation makes no claim as to the authenticity or otherwise of the body of Hadith reports; what matters here is how these reports were seen and used by Muslim scholars, not what their precise provenance in fact is.¹⁴⁷

Furthermore, while the revisionist theories of *ḥadīth* of the last decade have themselves been revised, many of these discussions remain theoretical. A study of Ibn al-Mubārak’s career as a scholar offers a window into the practical application of how one important individual in this network of *ḥadīth* scholarship that defined the Sunnī tradition represented the scholarly milieu that formed the backbone of the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā‘a*, or proto-Sunnīs. In our brief examination of the *ṭabaqa* (or generation of scholars) preceding Ibn al-Mubārak as related in biographical dictionaries, and the generation of scholars following that of Ibn al-Mubārak, we see an interconnectedness that held both symbolic and scholarly significance for the early Muslim community. The symbolic significance was that because of the network of *ḥadīth* scholars that preserved much of Islamic knowledge in the form of *ḥadīth*, Muslims could lay claim to a continuity of their tradition that has been preserved through *isnād*.

147 El Shamsy, *Canonization*, 8–9.

This would become viewed over time as Sunnī Islam's normative scholastic tradition that was passed on from each scholastic generation to another.

The second significance of the network of *ḥadīth* scholars was their role in the eyes of the population, who entrusted them with the preservation and continuation of the teachings of the Prophet and his early community. The authority of *ḥadīth* scholars was ultimately derived from the recognition they received from this population. This role—preserving the continuity of the tradition—was viewed as being achieved through the transmission of *ḥadīth* which permeated all aspects of Islamic knowledge. The distinction between the more specified field of *ḥadīth* sciences that evolves along with other sciences after the second/eighth century and the more general nature of what was known as “*ḥadīth*” in the early period of Islam is significant here. Prior to the compartmentalization and systematization of the Islamic sciences, knowledge related to Islam was transmitted generally in the broader category of “*ḥadīth*” that encompassed a variety of subjects and were attributed to a variety of early figures, including the Prophet.¹⁴⁸

Ensuring accuracy in the transmission of early Islamic knowledge in the form of *ḥadīth* was primarily based on two wider categories, which would become known as *ʿadāla*, or the reliability of transmitters. The first and foremost category that defined one's reliability was the accuracy of their transmission. Much has been written on this and we have seen that Ibn al-Mubārak quotes and preserves the views of earlier scholars known for their accuracy in impugning or verifying the accuracy of other transmitters. Indeed, volumes of *ḥadīth* criticism material that detail the degree to which a transmitter can retain information with categories that reflect the range of subtle differences in skills such as *thiqa*, *thiqa thiqa*, *lā ba's bihi*, etc. is a feature unique to Islamic literature. As previously noted, it is also significant that it was the authors of this same literature that impugned the accuracy of transmissions of figures like Ḥasan al-Basrī who is otherwise famed in the same literature for his piety.

148 Schoeler's research describes this movement toward *taṣnīf* or the systematization of general compilations of these types of *ḥadīths* into formalized texts divided by subject and chapter. Schoeler writes, “Traditional Muslim scholars themselves noticed that in the middle of the eighth century a new method of presenting and arranging knowledge had appeared, namely *taṣnīf*. *Taṣnīf* was a method which consisted in classifying material into works systematically subdivided into chapters organized according to subject matter, works that became known as *muṣannaḥāt*...What Ibn Ḥajar describes as happening in legal Hadith scholarship—the *Muwattaʾ* of Malik...was also happening in several related disciplines: in exegesis, history, grammar, lexicography and theology.” Cf. Schoeler and Toorawa, *Genesis of Literature*, 68.

The second primary factor in determining the *‘adāla* of a transmitter is piety. This factor is important because it enabled the network of *ḥadīth* scholars to reject the admission of a scholar into their circle, based on theological opinions deemed as unorthodox, even if this individual was accurate and precise in his ability to retain *ḥadīths*. The monopoly this network of *ḥadīth* scholars had on their definition of piety, and their ability to include or exclude individuals from their circle based on their Islamic practice was another significant factor that defined Sunnī Islam. As a result of the consensus of these scholars on various individuals such as ‘Amr b. ‘Ubayd or Wāṣil b. al-‘Aṭā’, the theological positions of these individuals was regarded as unorthodox and contrary to the prophetic teachings, because the general population of proto-Sunnī Muslims believed that this network of *ḥadīth* scholars was preserving the correct understanding of Islam. The importance of piety in *ḥadīth* transmission also demonstrates the vision these early Muslims had on the nature of their religion. It was not a religion merely based on rituals and laws, but a spiritual devotion to God; morality and ethics were regarded as important elements of the teachings of Islam. The space and time that classical texts of *ḥadīth* devote to discussing a transmitter’s piety, or lack thereof, in terms of his scrupulousness, honesty, worship, love of God, and detachment from the world indicate that these were regarded by this network of proto-Sunnī *ḥadīth* scholars as essential factors in determining an individual’s sincerity of faith, factors that had to be present in addition to accurate transmission. Thus, what was perceived as being a depiction of sincere inner practice of faith was another defining characteristic of the identity of Sunnī Islam, as I discuss at greater length in the following chapters.

Contrary to some theories which have attributed the development of Islamic spirituality and virtue ethics to outside influences, we find that the emphasis classical texts place on a character’s ethical and pious conduct contradict this premise and indicate that virtue and piety were matters which Muslims were concerned about from the earliest Islamic periods.¹⁴⁹ It is noteworthy that in Ibn al-Mubārak’s *Kitāb al-Jihād*, which is discussed in the following chapter, a great many of the *ḥadīths* included in them do not directly deal with combat or associated legal matters, but rather they discuss the so-called “greater jihād” of piety and ethical conduct.

149 Fred Donner also discusses the emphasis on piety found in the Qur’ān; he outlines numerous verses related to piety and argues that piety was an important theme in Islamic practice from its beginning. Cf. Donner, *Narratives*, 64–97.

Jihād in the Career of Ibn al-Mubārak

Jihād has been an important element of Islamic history from its earliest period. After the second Covenant of Aqaba, in which participation in combat was one of its conditions, classical sources state that the “lesser” *jihād* of physical combat played a decisive role in determining the historical outcome of the nascent Muslim community.¹ In addition to the major battles known to have taken place during the lifetime of the Prophet, such as the battles of Badr, Uhūd, Tabūk, and Ḥunayn, the *sīra* material reveals a series of smaller “clashes” which occurred between the early Muslims and neighboring Arab tribes. Sources cite the beginnings of Muslim and Byzantine confrontation toward the end of the Prophet’s life; at that time he was reported to have sent a force to engage the Byzantines under the leadership of Usāma b. Zayd.²

As Muslim expansion continued to increase under the leadership of the first four caliphs, the role of *jihād* and those who participated in physical combat continued to be significant.³ This is clear in the *maghāzī* literature which recounts the events of battles undertaken by the early Muslim commu-

- 1 The term “lesser” *jihād* is an allusion to the often cited *ḥadīth* in al-Bayhaqī’s *Kitāb al-Zuhd*: “We have returned from the lesser *jihād* to the greater *jihād*.” Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī also narrated this *ḥadīth* with the following wording, “One day we were returning from one of the battles and the Messenger of God said, ‘We have returned from the lesser *jihād* to the greater *jihād*.’ He was asked, ‘What is the greater *jihād*?’ He said, ‘Fighting the *nafs*.’” See al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:523–524. Fighting the *nafs* in this context has often been defined as controlling one’s whims and desires. The strength of this *ḥadīth* has been debated and most scholars categorize it as weak. Nevertheless, the majority of *ḥadīth* scholars held that it is permissible to use weak *ḥadīths* in matters that affirm already extant Islamic principles. The ubiquitousness of this distinction between the lesser and greater *jihāds* plays a significant role in Muslim thought and its view of the struggle to attain spiritual and ethical integrity as being even superior to justified martial struggle; hence it remains significant to our study regardless of the status of the *ḥadīth*.
- 2 Usāma b. Zayd’s mission appointment as general was a matter of controversy for some who regarded him as young and inferior in status as the son of a *mawla*. Sources state that the Prophet maintained his decision despite objections. The Prophet died soon after Usāma b. Zayd was sent to confront the Byzantines and the execution of this command was one of the first assignments initiated by Abū Bakr. See Ibn Sa’d, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 2:190 and Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Ma’ārif, 1960–77), 3:212.
- 3 For a detailed exposition on this see Fred Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).

nity. Interestingly, even Ibn Ishāq's famous compilation of the biography of the Prophet was not originally entitled as a *sīra*, as it later became known, but rather *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*.⁴ A significant portion of this work is also devoted to the battles undertaken by the Muslims during the Prophet's lifetime. While the accuracy of the details of these accounts cannot be ascertained, the general events including the battles themselves have been corroborated such that we can consider the broad structures of these narratives to be accurate. All of this is significant in that it also reveals the fundamental role that *jihād* played in the earliest periods of Muslim expansion and in the perspective of the later Muslim community who felt it was important to record and compose works devoted to this topic.

As Muslims envision the role these early battles played in the expansion of the Islamic presence, there was a surge of Muslims who glorified martial combat as a manifestation of piety and volunteered to keep guard in what became known as the *thughūr* or the frontier lands; these areas were often stable when manned, but were vulnerable if left unguarded. Sizgorich⁵ points out that this form of piety manifested in martial valor was not unique to the Muslim community, it was also practiced by many Christians during the period of Late Antiquity.⁶ Sizgorich writes:

Many recent studies have found much to lament concerning the prevalence of intolerance and factional violence among late antique religious communities. The irony, it would seem, is that while our picture of late antiquity has admitted of greater movement across many social and

4 "The *sīra*, *sīrat rasūl Allāh* or *al-sīra al-nabawīyya* have been the most widely used names for the traditional account of Muḥammad's life and background. Martin Hinds (*Maghāzī* and *Sīra*, in *La vie du Prophète Mahomet*, 57–66; see also *maghāzī*) has argued that the biographical material on the Prophet was transmitted during the first two centuries of Islam exclusively under the name of *maghāzī*, whereas *sīra* was applied only since Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833 or 213/828 [q.v.]). This view has been challenged by Maher Jarrar (*Prophetenbiographie*, 1–59), who claims that *maghāzī* is only part of the *sīra*, the designation being used occasionally as a *pars pro toto*, and that the biography was already called *sīra* by al-Zuhri (d. 124/742 [q.v.]), a central figure in the transmission of materials on the Prophet." See W. Raven, "Sīra," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second edition (Leiden: Brill, 1960–2004), 9:660.

5 Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief*.

6 Peter Brown sets the time frame of Late Antiquity between 150 and 750 AD. His arguments that this period saw a transformative process in which many of the institutions of the ancient empires of Rome and Persia evolved, and to a certain extent diminished, sets the course for the cultural and religious milieu in which Islam emerged in the area as a powerful force. Cf. Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150–750* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971).

communal boundaries than had previously been imagined, we have continued to find that those same boundaries were increasingly becoming sites for violent confrontation, contestation, and persecution.⁷

Indeed, we see that by the second/eighth century the emergence of the *thughūr* takes its full shape. As Muslims began to move into neighboring territories, the frontlines on the Muslim side were divided into districts that were nominally related to the provinces behind them.

We thus have the *thughūr* of *al-Shām* (or *thughūr al-shāmiyya*) comprised of al-Maṣṣīṣa, Adhana, Ṭarṣūs, al-Ḥadath, ‘Ayn Zarba, al-Hārūniyya, al-Kanīsa, al-Sawdā’, and a number of smaller places and the *thughūr* of al-Jazīra (or *al-thughūr al-jazariyya*) whose most important places are Shimshāt, Kamkh, Malaṭya, Mar‘ash, Zibaṭra, and Ḥisn Manṣūr.⁸

As Bonner writes, the new reality of incursions by the Muslims into Byzantine territory had a different and yet similar impact on the nature in which both the ‘Abbāsid and Byzantine empires governed their frontier lands. The Muslim threat made the protection of the Byzantine frontier lands a priority and this resulted in a surge of Christian forces motivated by a pious zeal to defend Christian territory from further loss. Although a number of fighters volunteered to guard the frontier lands, the *thughūr* did not reach a similar level of importance as a center of political power as it did in the Byzantine territories. Bonner writes:

In Byzantium the system of themes appears to have emerged in response to the need to protect the new frontiers of Asia minor; a frontier crisis of the seventh century may thus be said to have transformed Byzantine society and government. And in the centuries between Arab and the Turkish influx, we may identify the frontier district as the breeding ground of a new Byzantine warrior aristocracy and even of several emperors. But in the Islamic world, at least during the period of the independent caliphate no such thing happened. Conquest and jihād are central values of the Islamic polity. Yet, paradoxically, the Islamic frontier district never generated an elite of its own; and its role as a power base in the struggles of high politics was at most times correspondingly slight.⁹

7 Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief*, 21.

8 Michael Bonner, “The Emergence of the Thughūr: The Arab Byzantine Frontier in the Early ‘Abbāsid Age,” PhD dissertation (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 4.

9 Ibid., 1.

Interestingly, by the late second/eighth century we do, however, find a trend among scholars and pious figures, a great many of whom came to the *thughūr* of Shām (greater Syria) from the east to spend a period of time guarding the western territories of the Islamic frontiers. How did this trend emerge? What exactly was the nature of the *thughūr* where ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak spent such considerable time? In order to contextualize Ibn al-Mubārak’s role as a scholar fighter from Khurāsān on the frontiers of Shām, it is important to begin with an overview of some of the fighters who preceded him.

The *Thughūr* before Ibn al-Mubārak

Biographical dictionaries cite numerous references to figures who fought in the *thughūr* prior to Ibn al-Mubārak; these references indicate the origins of those volunteering to guard the frontiers as an act of piety and we can date these volunteers to the earliest period of Islamic history, the period well before Ibn al-Mubārak’s era.

The earliest generation to participate in battles in the post-prophetic era was the generation of the Companions (*ṣaḥāba*). References in classical sources state that Salmān al-Farsī fought in the east, Khālīd b. al-Walīd fought in Syria, and Bilāl al-Ḥabashī also fought in Syria and was said to be buried in Damascus. Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī is said to have participated in campaigns against the Byzantines in Asia Minor while ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb is famous not only for his role as caliph but also for his leading role in the expansion of Muslim territories. It is not uncommon to find references in classical texts to the ambition of these diverse figures—ambition motivated by a sense of piety. Examples of individuals from the generations following the Companions of the Prophet include the following.¹⁰

- 1 Rawḥ b. Zinbā‘ al-Judhāmī (d. 84/703): Known as Abū Zur‘a, he is described as having been “a worshiper, fighter, ascetic who was far from leaving his pursuits.” He was also a transmitter of *ḥadīth* and his father is reported to have been a Companion. He died in Jordan and was originally from the town of Ramallah in Palestine.¹¹
- 2 ‘Uqba b. Wasāj b. Ḥiṣn al-Azdī (d. 83/702): He is reported to have been from

10 ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Muḥtasib, *‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak al-Marwāzī* (Amman: Jam‘iyyat al-‘Ummāl al-Maṭābi‘ al-Ta‘awuniyya, 1972), 118–119.

11 Akram Muḥammad Ziyāda, *Mu‘jam al-ṣaghūr li-ruwāt Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī* (Cairo: Dār Ibn ‘Affān, n.d.), Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, 18:241–248.

the “[perpetual] warriors on land and water.” He transmitted *ḥadīth* from Companions such as ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar and Abū l-Dardā’. He is referred to as one of the senior Successors (*tābi‘īn*) through his companionship with Abū l-Dardā’ in Syria where he lived. His death, in battle in Jamājim or al-Zāwiya, is a matter of dispute.¹²

- 3 Sa’d b. Hishām b. ‘Āmir al-Anṣārī: He was a cousin of the important Companion Anas b. Mālīk and considered a Successor from Basra. He was from the “worshipful *tābi‘īn* who continually participated in battles.” He is said to have died during a battle in Makrān. His death date appears to be unknown, at least it is not mentioned in the sources I have found. However, he transmitted *ḥadīth* from the Prophet’s wife ‘Ā’isha, which would mean that he was among the first century of early Successors to the Companions.¹³
- 4 Ishāq b. Qubayṣa b. Dhu’ayb al-Khuzā‘ī l-Ka’bī (d. 86/705): He was from the scholars of Medina and its community of pious worshipers. He is said to have frequently traveled “to Syria for business and battles.”¹⁴ It is reported that he fought “in the land of the Romans” with Mu‘āwiya while he was governor. Al-Mizzī reports an anecdote that Ishāq b. Qubayṣa went with Mu‘āwiya to the land of the Byzantines and found that they exchange dinars for gold and dirhams for silver. The narrative states that Ishāq objected to this based on a *ḥadīth* he heard from the Prophet that exchanging gold for gold and silver for silver amounted to interest. Mu‘āwiya did not agree to put a stop to this practice and thus Ishāq left Syria and returned to Medina whereupon the caliph ‘Umar sent him back, saying that the land of Syria needs the like of him; ‘Umar also sent a letter saying that Ishāq is exempt from the jurisdiction of Mu‘āwiya.¹⁵
- 5 al-Awzā‘ī (d. 157/773): He is from among the Followers of the Followers (*tāba‘ al-tābi‘īn*) and as noted earlier an important teacher of Ibn al-Mubārak. He is said to have died in Beirut while guarding the frontiers.¹⁶

12 al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, 20:228–230; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 7:251.

13 Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad b. Ḥibbān [Ibn Ḥibbān], *Kitāb al-Thiqāt*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Mu‘īd Khān, 9 vols. (Hyderabad: Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uthmāniyya, 1973), 4:294; and Ibn Ḥibbān, *Mashāhīr ‘ulamā’ al-amṣār wa-fuqahā’ al-aqtār*, ed. Marzūq ‘Alī Ibrāhīm (Mansoura: Dār al-Wafā’, 1991), 147.

14 Ibn Ḥibbān, *Mashāhīr ‘ulamā’*, 107.

15 al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, 2:468–469.

16 For a detailed account of al-Awzā‘ī see chapter 1 of the present book, and Ibn Abi Ḥātim, *Taqdīmat al-ma‘rifā*, 1:184–219.

- 6 ‘Umar b. Muḥammad b. Zayd b. ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb: He was a descendent of the second caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and was from Medina. He died guarding the frontiers in ‘Asqalān (in greater Syria).¹⁷ Though he is not known to have transmitted many *ḥadīth*, al-Bukhārī cites al-Thawrī and Mālik as students of his in *ḥadīth*.¹⁸
- 7 Ibrāhīm b. Adham b. Maṣṣūr (d. 161/777): He was originally from Balkh and later lived in Baghdad. He eventually left Baghdad for Syria in search of “pure provision.” In addition to his asceticism, Ibn Adham was also known for his frequent participation in battles and the time he spent guarding the frontier lands. He is said to have died in battle against the Byzantines.¹⁹
- 8 Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Dhī Ḥimaya al-Raḥbī: He was a judge from Homs, in greater Syria. He then moved to Tarsus where he died guarding the frontier against the Byzantines.²⁰

Sizgorich in his work, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity*, emphasizes martial pursuit as a form of piety in the second/eighth century. The numerous references to martial valor motivated by religious interest indicate, however, that this was not a new trend in the second/eighth century, but was, rather, a practice dating to the prophetic period soon after the advent of Islam. The above are only a few of the many references to early figures who were committed to guarding the *thughūr* preceding Ibn al-Mubārak’s era.

Furthermore, assuming an early origin of martial zeal would explain the reality of Muslim expansion in the first few decades after the Prophet’s death. If piety became a motivating factor only during the second/eighth century, as Sizgorich implies, it would be necessary to produce historical evidence that would explain the motivating factor that extraordinarily brought together a once tribally divided Arabian Peninsula into a force powerful enough to dominate greater Syria in a matter of decades.

In examining the early Muslims’ views of physical combat for the sake of God, it is significant to note the numerous verses in the Qur’ān that make reference to participating in physical combat and its rewards; these help us date the concepts of martial pursuits prior to the second/eighth century. For example:

17 Ibn Maʿīn, *al-Tārīkh*, 3:241.

18 al-Bukhārī, *Tārīkh al-kabīr*.

19 Ibn Ḥibbān, *Kitāb al-Thiqāt*, 6:24.

20 Ibid., 6:13.

O you who believe, what is the matter with you, that, when ye are asked to go forth in the cause of God, you cling heavily to the earth? Do you prefer the life of this world to the hereafter? But little is the comfort of this life, as compared with the hereafter. Unless you go forth, He will punish you with a grievous penalty, and put others in your place; but Him you would not harm in the least. For God has power over all things. If you do not help (your leader), (it is no matter): for God did indeed help him, when the unbelievers drove him out: he had no more than one companion; they two were in the cave, and he said to his companion, "Have no fear, for God is with us": then God sent down His peace upon him, and strengthened him with forces which you did not see, and humbled to the depths the word of the unbelievers. But the word of God is exalted to the heights: for God is Exalted in might, Wise. Go forth, (whether equipped) lightly or heavily, and strive and struggle, with your goods and your persons, in the cause of God. That is best for you, if you (but) knew.²¹

Another verse is, "Fighting is prescribed for you, and you dislike it. But it is possible that you dislike a thing which is good for you, and that you love a thing which is bad for you. But God knows, and you know not."²² Finally, another important verse related to *jihād* is the following:

O You who believe! Shall I guide you to a commerce that will save you from a painful torment? That you believe in God and His Messenger, and that you strive (your utmost) in the cause of God, with your property and your persons: That will be best for you, if you but knew! He will forgive you your sins, and admit you to gardens beneath which rivers flow, and to beautiful mansions in gardens of eternity: that is indeed the supreme achievement. And another (favor will He bestow,) which you do love, help from God and a speedy victory. So give the glad tidings to the believers.²³

Thus the historical evidence mentioned above reveals that the interest in martial pursuits dated to the early period, yet continued to evolve after contact with the Byzantines.

21 Qur'ān, 9:38–41

22 Qur'ān, 2:216.

23 Qur'ān, 61:10–13.

Ibn al-Mubārak's Martial Pursuits as Depicted in the Classical Sources

A study of Ibn al-Mubārak's role as a *mujāhid* would be incomplete without an evaluation of how he is depicted in the sources. While it is not possible to assess to what extent the reports in these sources are historically accurate and which sections of the reports about Ibn al-Mubārak are later additions, the way in which Ibn al-Mubārak is represented in the texts in itself reflects how he was perceived by later Muslims.

Al-Dhahabī gives Ibn al-Mubārak the title *fakhr al-mujāhidīn* (the "pride of the fighters").²⁴ Ibn Kathīr writes that Ibn al-Mubārak fought "numerous" battles.²⁵ Al-Dhahabī also writes that Ibn al-Mubārak used to go on pilgrimage one year and to guard the frontiers another (*kāna yaḥij sana wa-yaghzū murābiṭan fī sabīlillāh fī l-thughūr sana*).²⁶ He also writes that he would rotate between guarding the fronts in Tartus and al-Maṣīṣa. All of this reflects Ibn al-Mubārak's status and fame as a fighter.

As expected, sources cite anecdotes that mention Ibn al-Mubārak's valor in battle. The following is a well known anecdote attributed to Ibn al-Mubārak during battle.

We were in a battle with Ibn al-Mubārak in the land of the Byzantines. We met the enemy and when the ranks came [out facing] each other a man from the enemy came out challenging [one of us] to duel. Then a man came out [from our side] and fought him and killed him. Another man challenged him and he fought and killed him. He then called out for another dueler and a man came to him and they fought for an hour. Eventually, he [the man from our side] stabbed and killed him. People then started to crowd toward him and I was among them and the man had his face covered with his sleeve. I took hold of a side of his sleeve and I pulled it away from his face and he was 'Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak. He then said, "You O Abū 'Umar, are you from those who expose us?"²⁷

It was also said that Ibn al-Mubārak would disappear when it was time to divide the spoils of war. When asked about this, al-Dhahabī states that Ibn al-

24 al-Dhahabī, *Tahdkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 1:253.

25 Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, 10:177.

26 al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 6:492; al-Dhahabī, *al-'Ibar fī khabar man ghabar*, 10:281.

27 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghḍādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 10:167; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 6:504.

Mubārak replied, “The One for whose sake I fight knows me.”²⁸ It should be noted that the references to Ibn al-Mubārak in battle are consistent in emphasizing his *zuhd* or piety rather than his martial valor or bravery. Even in the first narrative in which Ibn al-Mubārak is described as successfully engaging a number of the Byzantines in duels, the emphasis of the story is on his desire to remain unknown rather than his skill as a fighter. This humble demeanor and desire to be unknown reflects an important theme in Ibn al-Mubārak’s piety as is evident in the next chapter; this is a state of sincerity in actions performed for the sake of God. This is also the underlying theme in the narrative of his disappearance during the division of spoils. Rather than seeking material benefit, or attaining fame or wealth from his acts of valor, Ibn al-Mubārak is depicted as seeking his reward from God.

This is reflective of an Islamic perspective of *jihād* which divides *jihād* into what is known as the “greater” *jihād* and the “lesser” *jihād*. This is based on the context of a well-known *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet is cited as stating that he came from the lesser *jihād* to the greater one upon his return from battle. The greater *jihād* is defined as one’s daily struggles to be a better person, while the lesser *jihād* is participation in battle. While scholars of *ḥadīth* have criticized the strength of this attribution to the Prophet and concluded that it is a weak *ḥadīth*, in the context of our study the ubiquitousness of this tradition is significant as it reflects the generally accepted attitudes of Muslims and the way they understood *jihād* and its relation to being an ethical person.

In the portrayal of Ibn al-Mubārak, we see this perspective reflected in the way the lines between the greater and lesser *jihād* are not distinctly defined. Ibn al-Mubārak participates in the lesser *jihād* to assist him in his greater *jihād*. In addition, even in his participation in the lesser *jihād*, his fame is due to his success in the greater *jihād* of piety rather than his exceptionalism as a warrior. Thus, Ibn al-Mubārak was seen as a model of piety even in contexts in which he could have been recognized for other qualities, such as martial valor. The following anecdote is similar to the ones noted earlier.

We were with Ibn al-Mubārak in the land of the Byzantines and while we were walking one night with the [rainy] sky above us and the wet earth beneath us, Ibn al-Mubārak said: O Abū Muḥammad, we squandered our days in vanity and showing off in exchange for the likes of these nights. When we awoke [in the morning] we went toward the water and people were racing to water their riding animals. Ibn al-Mubārak put his animal forward and a man from the people of the *thughūr* came and struck Ibn

28 al-Dhahabī, *Sīyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, 6:505.

al-Mubārak's animal in its face and pushed his own animal forward. He said, "O Abū Muḥammad, competition is in the likes of this situation [i.e., competing for obscurity] and not in the situation in which if we are seen it is said: 'Make way for Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān [i.e., having recognition and status]. Come forward, O Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān.'"²⁹

This anecdote reveals multiple levels of the perspective of the early Muslim community on piety as depicted in the figure of Ibn al-Mubārak. First, there is an emphasis on the sincerity of intentions here, as Ibn al-Mubārak refers to his city life as a scholar as "vanity" and "showing off." The reference to scholarly pursuits for worldly benefit rather than for the sake of God is a common theme in early Islamic literature (as we discuss further in the chapter on *zuhd*). Numerous other references to Ibn al-Mubārak condemning scholars who seek religious knowledge with non-religious ulterior motives seems to indicate that this was a likely occurrence, and one that many pious individuals warned against. Al-Dhahabī cites Ibn al-Mubārak as having made the following statement regarding scholars who use their religion for worldly gain.

He was once asked, "Who are the people (of virtue)?"

He said, "The scholars."

"Then who are the kings?"

He said, "The humble ascetic ones."

"Who are the loud, talkative ones (without any substance)?"

He said, "Khuzaymah and his companions."

"Who are the foolish ones?" He said, "Those who consume and live off their religion."³⁰

Another related theme in classical sources is the portrayal of Ibn al-Mubārak as having shunned the snares of wealth and the power of rulers. Ibn al-Mubārak is said to have received an invitation from Ismā'il b. 'Aliyya, who had been one of Ibn al-Mubārak's companions and was later employed as a judge by the government. Ismā'il b. 'Aliyya sent word to Ibn al-Mubārak to send reciters from among his companions so that he could employ them. Ibn al-Mubārak responded to this offer with the words, "Reciters of the Qur'ān are of two types: those who seek this matter for the sake of God and they have no need to meet you. [The second] are those who seek it for the world and they are the most harmful to the people." It is then reported that Ibn al-Mubārak recited the following poem:

29 Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdimat al-ma'rifa*, 280.

30 al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 7:399.

يا جا عل العلم له با مز يا	يصاد أموال المساكين
احتلت للدنيا ولذاتها	بميلة تذهب بالدين
فصرت مجنونا بها بعدما	أنت دواء للمجانين
أين رواياتك في سردها	عن ابن عون وابن سيرين
أين رواياتك فيما مضى	في ترك أبواب السلاطين
إن قلت آأرحت فما هكذا	زل حمار الشيخ في الطين

O you who made his knowledge a falcon
 With which he seizes the wealth of the poor.
 You have taken on the world and its delights
 With a scheme that diminishes religion!
 And so you have become ill
 After having been a cure for illness
 Where are your recorded transmissions
 From Ibn 'Awn and Ibn Sīrīn?
 Where are your transmissions in the past
 About abandoning the doors of the rulers?
 If you say that you have been forced (into judgment)
 Then that is not how the donkey of a scholar slips into mud

While the historical accuracy of the incident outlined above is unclear, we can detect a general attitude of disdain for corrupt scholars. It also would appear that by the time many of these narratives were composed, religious scholars and specialists in sciences such as *ḥadīth* or the recitation of the Qur'ān were highly esteemed. Along with such esteem we find those who are sincere and those who succumb to human weakness and act out of ulterior motives. This is significant on another level; it reinforces the assertions made in the second chapter, namely that Muslim scholars had an esteemed rank in society that was a result of their popularity among the masses as figures of piety. Their endorsement by the majority of common citizens in turn gave them the ability to steer the course of the formative period of Sunnī Islam in which their approval or disapproval of ideas and individuals would impact how these ideas and individuals were accepted by the masses.

Returning to the original narrative, in addition to Ibn al-Mubārak's desire for obscurity while guarding the *thughūr*, there is also a comparison being made between the status of the scholar and the status of one guarding the

frontiers. Some narrations attributed to Ibn al-Mubārak depict him as claiming that spending time in the *thughūr* was superior to the pilgrimage. The following are well-known lines of poetry attributed to Ibn al-Mubārak in a letter sent to Fuḍayl b. 'Iyād through Ibn Abī Sukayna.

يا عابد الحرمين لو ابصرتنا	لعلمت انك في العبادة تلعب
من كان يخضب خده بدموعه	فنجورنا بدمائنا نتخضب
من كان يتعب خيله في باطل	فخيولنا يوم الصبيحة تتعب
ريح العير لكم ونحن غيرنا	ريح السنايك والغبار الأطيب
ولقد أتانا من مقال نبينا	قول صحيح صادق لا يكذب
لا يستوي غبار خيل الله في	أنف امرئ ودخان نار تلهب
هذا كتاب الله يحكم بيننا	ليس الشهيد بميت لا يكذب

O worshiper of the two holy mosques!

Were you to see us, you would realize your worship is mere play
[While] for one his cheeks are wet with tears [in worship]
[It is] blood that wets our necks

Or him whose horse tires in vain

While our horses toil on the morning of combat
For you is the smell of fragrance, but our fragrance
Is the more pleasant [smell] of dust kicked up
And indeed, the words of our Prophet have reached us

A correct and truthful statement which cannot be denied
The dust stirred up by the horse of God which enters a man's nose
Cannot coexist with the smoke of the blazing fire of [hell]
This is the Book of God which [will] judge between us
Surely, the [words] "the martyr is not dead" cannot be refuted³¹

While the accuracy of the attribution of these words to Ibn al-Mubārak is unclear, we can deduce from this that a general comparison and debate regarding the merits of guarding the *thughūr* and performing extra worship or extra pilgrimages was discussed in the early Muslim period. Interestingly, centuries later Ibn Taymiyya wrote a treatise known as, *Mas'alat murābiṭ fī l-thughūr*

31 Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, 11:513.

afḍal min al-mujāwara fī Mecca sharrafahu Allāh taʿāla [The issue of the fighter in the frontiers being superior to remaining in Mecca, [which is] honored by God most high], in which he argues the contrary, saying that going on the pilgrimage is in fact superior to guarding the *thughūr*. The title of this treatise indicates that by Ibn Taymiyya's time, the issue was a topic of debate. Similar references to this comparison in the context of Ibn al-Mubārak are also found in the classical sources.

We went out in battle with Ibn al-Mubārak to Syria. When he saw the worship, battle, and combat that [one engaged] in there each day he turned to me and said: "From God we come and to Him we return" (*innā lillāh wa-innā ilayhi rājiʿūn*) for the days we spent, for the days we squandered, and spent on the science of divorce while we left the doors of paradise here open.³²

The Qurʾānic phrase "from God we come and to Him we return" is commonly used when a Muslim dies. This quote seems to imply that Ibn al-Mubārak considers the days spent outside the *thughūr* as analogous to "death," or time which was wasted. It is also noteworthy that worship and combat are combined here in the description of the Syrian frontier. This would indicate that it was a center not only of martial pursuit but also that the individuals in the *thughūr* were commonly pious people who spent the quiet time at the frontiers as secluded worshipers and, as we see elsewhere, used the time to engage in scholarship. The following describes Ibn al-Mubārak among the worshipers of the *thughūr*. Ibn al-Jawzī writes that al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad said:

We used travel with Ibn al-Mubārak and often I used to wonder and say to myself, "What is it that distinguishes Ibn al-Mubārak from the rest of us that has caused him to have the fame that he does?" If he prays, we also pray. If he fasts, we also fast. And if he fights in battle, we also fight in battle. If he goes on pilgrimage, we also go on pilgrimage. One day we were on one of our travels on the road to Syria and we stopped one evening to eat at a house and the lantern went out. Some of us got up and took the lantern and went out to light it, then remained for a while and returned with the lantern. I looked at the face of Ibn al-Mubārak and his beard and it had become wet with tears. I then said to myself, "It is because of this

32 Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi, *al-Uqd al-farīd*, ed. Mufid Muḥammad Qamīḥa, 9 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1983), 5:285.

piety that this man has been favored over us. When the lantern had gone out and he was in the dark, he remembered the Day of Judgment.”³³

This anecdote reveals the way Ibn al-Mubārak was perceived by the Muslim community as a figure of piety. It also reflects what must have been his exceptional fame among the masses.

Finally, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī cites a related event in which Ibn al-Mubārak was in Baghdad and passed Ibn Itāhiyya, a man known for both his poetry and asceticism. Upon being told the identity of this individual it is said that he recited the following lines:

أيها الناسك الذي لبس الصوف	وأضحى يعد في العباد
الزمر الثغر والتعب فيه	ليس بغداد مسكن الزهاد
إن بغداد للملوك محل	ومناخ للقارئ الصياد

O you monk who wears wool
 And has come to be considered among the worshipers
 Adhere to the frontlines and worship there
 For Baghdad is not a place for ascetics
 Indeed Baghdad is a place for kings
 And a residence for the opportunist reciter

We can derive much valuable information from these lines. First, once again we see that there is a tension between those who worshiped in safety and comfort, and those who went to guard the *thughūr*. While this may not be the case throughout, there appears to have been a group of ascetics whose acts were regarded as futile or insincere, since according to this reasoning a true ascetic would not remain in a worldly city like Baghdad.

This brings us to our second observation, which is about the city of Baghdad and what it was like during the early period in which this narrative was reported. Baghdad was depicted as a city with such extremes of luxury and comfort that the true asceticism of an individual choosing to dwell there should be questioned.

Finally, we see once more the status of religious scholars in the first few Islamic centuries, when one could gain position by reciting the Qurʾān; this is only possible in a field that is highly regarded in the community. Thus, we see discussions about what it means to be a sincere worshiper or a sincere

33 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*, 4:121.

scholar, as opposed to one who is engaging in these activities for worldly gain. High status also reflects authority or so-called “social capital”; scholars had authority with the masses and thus were able to define “orthodoxy.”

Furthermore, it is implied that the scholars and ascetics (or the people of *zuhd*, as they were known) differed in their views of the proper manifestation of piety. This is a matter which Bonner touches upon in his study of the scholars situated in the *thughūr*. The frontlines became posts which attracted a great many scholars and people of piety in the early Islamic period, particularly during the era of Ibn al-Mubārak. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī mentions, regarding the city of Tarsus:

A city in the frontlines (*thughūr*) of Shām between Antakya, Aleppo, and Byzantium ... In it is the grave of Ma'mūn who came there to fight and met his fate there and died ... It was a center for the people of righteousness (*ṣāliḥīn*) and asceticism (*zuhhād*) who sought to stand guard (*ribāṭ*) and fight because it was one of the frontlines of the Muslims.³⁴

There is a similar entry on the town of al-Maṣīṣa: “It is a city on the Jayhān coast from among the frontlines between Antakya and Byzantium. It is near Tarsus and is among the famous frontlines (*thughūr*) of the Muslims. In the past the people of piety used stay [here] guarding this [frontier].”³⁵

We also find various references that mention Ibn al-Mubārak's contemporaries who spent time in the *thughūr*; these include as Fuḍayl b. 'Iyāḍ, al-Awzā'ī, and al-Fazārī. The frontiers were often places of little activity and much solitary quiet time, thus those inclined toward worship would have time to worship and those inclined toward scholarship would have been able to focus on learning and transmitting *ḥadīth* from other scholar warriors who were there. Ibn Abī Ḥātim describes Ibn al-Mubārak as having taught *ḥadīth* to the people of the *thughūr*. It is said that he would collect the fighters of the *thughūr* and “he would teach them knowledge [often meaning *ḥadīth*] and have them write *ḥadīth* from him the way they would learn from him bravely.”³⁶

Bonner makes a valuable assessment of the scholar ascetics of the frontier, and notes that the movement of the early Muslim community to defend the frontiers may not have been a new trend in the early 'Abbāsid period, rather, what was novel in the second/eighth century was a trend of scholars and people of piety establishing themselves in the frontier territory, often

34 Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1997), 6:38.

35 Ibid., 8:80.

36 Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdimat al-ma'rifa*, 278.

with limited or no ties to the caliph himself. Bonner uses three well-known scholars and ascetics, al-Fazārī, Ibn al-Mubārak, and Ibn Adham, to categorize the various trends.

Al-Fazārī was an important scholar of the second/eighth century; his *Kitāb al-Siyar* was one of the earliest books of the *fiqh* (or jurisprudence) of war. Much of his work consists of legal debates engaging many of the early Islamic jurists and scholars such as Sufyān al-Thawrī, al-Awzā'ī, and others. The great Ḥanafī jurist Abū Yūsuf responded to this work in his *Kitāb al-Radd 'alā al-siyar*. In addition to being a scholar of law, al-Fazārī was also known for his piety and adherence to the positions of the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā'a*. In classical works he is noted as being from the *ṣāhib al-sunna wa-l-jamā'a*.³⁷ Bonner points out that al-'Ijlī describes al-Fazārī's role in the *thughūr* in the following: "[Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī] was the one who taught the inhabitants of the frontier district how to behave (*addaba ahl al-thughūr*). He instructed them in the *sunna* and used to command and prohibit. Whenever a man inclined to innovation (*rajuḥ muḥtadī*) entered the frontier region, Abū Ishāq would throw him out."³⁸ Al-Fazārī is also said to have excluded individuals who demonstrated theological tendencies that differed with the normative position of the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā'a*. Bonner cites the following incident from the sources, "Once a man came to al-Maṣṣīṣa and began to speak favorably of *qadar*. Abū Ishāq sent word to him saying, 'Stay away!'"³⁹

These descriptions of the frontier give us an idea of the milieu of the circles of scholars and ascetics who were then dominant there. In the classical sources, the word *adab* is used to describe pious conduct. Ibn al-Mubārak said, "I sought *adab* for thirty years then I sought knowledge for twenty years. And they used to seek *adab* before knowledge."⁴⁰ Thus both piety and scholarship were emphasized by the scholars of the *thughūr*; this corroborates the style of the many reports seen earlier regarding Ibn al-Mubārak and would seem to validate its historical claim in a general sense.

Second, the importance of what was seen as the normative positions of the network of scholars known as the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā'a* also corroborates the events and the intellectual environment of the second/eighth century. By this period we see the maturation of the Sunnī intellectual tradition as represented by those scholars who were highly respected by the masses. In addition, their endorsement of each other and certain legal and theologi-

37 See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, 2:105–107; Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, 109.

38 Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, 110.

39 Ibid.

40 Shams al-Dīn b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghayat al-nihāya fī ṭabaqāt al-qurrā'*, ed. Gotthelf Bergsträsser, 3 vols. (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sa'āda, 1933–37), 1:446.

cal positions gave these positions authority as well as their acceptance by a critical mass of the Muslim community who regarded these scholars as preservers of the *sunna*. This resulted in these scholars and the majority of Muslims who were their adherents eventually acquiring the label of *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā'a*. The *jamā'a* here is an important aspect of this category that represents this network of scholars who formed a consensus on the general framework of what they defined as "orthodoxy" while differing among each other in its details. It is also not insignificant that Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/844) refers to al-Fazārī as *al-ṣāhib al-sunna wa-l-ghazww*.⁴¹ The era of this important historian of the second/eighth century coincides with the formative period during which Sunnīs began to more concretely define what they viewed as normative Islamic beliefs and practices.

Ibn Adham differed from al-Fazārī and Ibn al-Mubārak in the sense that he was primarily known for his asceticism rather than as a scholar. It was said that he traveled to Syria seeking purity of provision, and sought first and foremost to shun the world and its ability to "pollute." In contrast, the more scholarly pious figures above, particularly Ibn al-Mubārak, strongly advocated against the idea of shunning the world.

The flux of eastern scholars into Syria and their influence on the scholars of Syria must also be noted. The existence of high caliber scholarship in Syria from the east is likely a significant reason that al-Awzā'ī's school of law did not flourish in Syria and eventually died out.⁴² In their journey to Syria, the scholar ascetics of the frontier also played a significant role in transmitting *ḥadīth* and bringing with them the scholarship that was prevalent at the time in places like Baghdad. The way these scholars met and exchanged knowledge was not unlike the exchanges that took place during the hajj.

Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Jihād*

Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Jihād* was an important work in the early Islamic period. It is reported that Ibn 'Asākir read from Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Jihād* in the Umayyad Mosque during the Crusades.⁴³ His work is regarded as the first independent book devoted solely to *jihād*; after it a genre of *kutub al-jihād* followed, among them are works by the following authors:

41 Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, 110.

42 Bonner convincingly makes the case for this in his work, *Aristocratic Violence*, 130.

43 Angeliki Laiou and Roy Mottahedeh, *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2001), 30.

- 1 Thābit b. Nadhīr al-Qurṭubī al-Mālikī (d. 318/930)⁴⁴
- 2 Abū Sulaymān Ḥamd b. Muḥammad al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998)⁴⁵
- 3 Abū Muḥammad Qāsim b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. ‘Asākīr [Ibn ‘Asākīr] (d. 600/1203)⁴⁶
- 4 ‘Izz al-Dīn b. al-Athīr through Muḥammad al-Jazārī (d. 630/1232)⁴⁷
- 5 ‘Imād al-Dīn Ismā‘īl b. ‘Umar Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372)⁴⁸

The first to publish an edition of Ibn al-Mubārak’s *Kitāb al-Jihād* was Nazīh Ḥammād, a member of the faculty in ‘Abd al-‘Azīz University in Mecca.⁴⁹ His introduction to the *Kitāb al-Jihād* provides valuable information on the manuscript and the methodology he used in compiling this edition. Ḥammād used the only known available copy, which is referred to by Brockelmann and extant as a manuscript (no. 320) in Leipzig University Library. It is recorded as having 40 pages of 22 to 26 lines each. It appears to date to the fifth/eleventh century or earlier since there are three recensions of it, two are by editors who give the date as 462/1069 and the third gives the date as 463/1070. The manuscript divides the book into two main sections and the beginning of each page indicates whether it is a part of the first or second section. After indicating whether the page is from the first or second section, the following chain of transmission is provided for the book:

Kitāb al-Jihād, taṣnīf ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak *riwāyat* Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. al-Faṭḥ b. ‘Abdallāh al-Jilī *‘an* Muḥammad b. Sufyān al-Ṣafār *‘an* Sa‘īd b. Raḥma *‘anhu riwāyat* al-Shaykh Abī l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ābnūsī al-Ṣirafī *raḥimahu Allāh, samā’* al-Shaykh al-Jalīl Abī ‘Alī l-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Dalfī *ballaghahu Allāh amālihi*.⁵⁰

44 Ḥajjī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-ẓunūn*, 2:1410.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid., 1:622. The title of his book varies slightly. It is *al-Ijtihād fī ṭalab al-jihād*.

49 ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Jihād*, ed. Nazīh Ḥammād (Cairo: Mujamma‘ al-Buḥūth al-Islāmiyya, 1978).

50 Ibid., 21–22.

Transmitters of the *Kitāb al-Jihād*

The following information is available about the transmitters of the *Kitāb al-Jihād*.

- 1 Sa'īd b. Raḥma: Al-Dhahabī notes that Sa'īd b. Raḥma b. Na'īm al-Maṣīṣī related the *Kitāb al-Jihād* from Ibn al-Mubārak.⁵¹
- 2 Muḥammad b. Sufyān al-Ṣafār: No separate biography for this individual could be found in classical references, however, the editor directs readers to the following sources, which mention this transmitter: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī in his *Tārīkh*,⁵² al-Sam'ānī in his *Ansāb*,⁵³ and al-Zabīdī in his *Tāj al-'arūs*.⁵⁴ The editor also points out that in the biography of Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Faṭḥ al-Jilī there is mention that he narrated from Muḥammad b. Sufyān al-Ṣafār al-Maṣīṣī.
- 3 Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Jilī (d. 385/995): He is known as Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. al-Faṭḥ al-Maṣīṣī al-Jilī. He was born in al-Maṣīṣa and left after it fell to the Crusaders; he then moved to Baghdad where he remained and transmitted *ḥadīth*.⁵⁵
- 4 Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ābnūsī: Abū l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī l-Ābnūsī al-Ṣirafī was from Baghdad and said to be born in 381/991 and died in 457/1064.⁵⁶
- 5 Al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Dalfī (d. 484/1091): Abū 'Alī l-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn b. Ibrāhīm al-Dalfī al-Maqdisī. He was a jurist of Baghdad, known for his worship and exceptional piety.⁵⁷

51 al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-i'tidāl*, 2:135.

52 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 6:171.

53 Abū Sa'd 'Abd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad b. Maṣṣūr al-Sam'ānī, *al-Ansāb*, ed. 'Abdallāh al-Bārūdī, 5 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Jinān, 1988), 3:313.

54 Muḥammad Murtaḍā l-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'arūs min jawāhir al-qāmūs*, ed. Muṣṭafā Ḥijāzī, 16 vols. (Kuwait: Maṭba'at Ḥukūmat al-Kuwayt, 1973), 7:262.

55 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Alī b. al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fi tārikh al-mulūk wa-l-unam* (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Uthmāniyya, 1940), 7:179; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 6:171; al-Sam'ānī, *al-Ansāb* 3:313; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'arūs* 7:262.

56 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād* 1:356; al-Sam'ānī, *al-Ansāb* 1:67; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 8:238; 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi l-tārīkh*, 13 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, 1965), 8:103; Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-nihāya fi ṭabaqāt al-qurrā'*, 3 vols. (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Khanjī, 1934), 2:87.

57 al-Sam'ānī, *al-Ansāb* 5:368; 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. Ṭāqī l-Dīn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-kubrā*, (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Ḥusayniyya, n.d.), 3:160.

A close reading of Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Jihād* reveals a trove of historical information and insight about the early Muslim community. Regardless of whether this book was composed by Ibn al-Mubārak himself or was a later compilation by his students, a close examination of the text provides important insight into the world of the early Muslim community which transmitted this book.

In terms of genre, Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Jihād* can be characterized as a *ḥadīth* text. This compilation coincides with the *muṣannaf* period in the chronology of the development of *ḥadīth* texts, a period during which collections of *ḥadīths* organized according to subject began to appear. The text is generally organized chronologically: references to events which occurred during the prophetic period and quotes attributed to the Prophet appear in the earlier parts of the text while *ḥadīths* of the words and narratives attributed to later figures appear later in the text. This progression provides the reader with valuable insight into the perspective of the early Muslim community's perception of its martial history which is the focus of this compilation.

The following are some of the themes of Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Jihād*: proper intentions behind participation in battle, the reward associated with *jihād*, narratives of battles that took place during the Prophet's lifetime, narratives of the early battles of the conquests, comparisons between the reward for *jihād* and worship, the greater *jihād* against the vices of the self, and references to battles against the Byzantines (closer to the period of Ibn al-Mubārak).

Intentions and *Jihād*

While at first glance it may not seem to be a significant element of Ibn al-Mubārak's work, in fact his emphasis on intentions is an important reflection of a trend in works of piety, though intentions are more often associated with *zuhd* and literature on *taṣawwuf* during later Islamic periods. Ibn al-Mubārak and the early community believed that the merits of outward actions are intricately related to an individual's inward reality. It is one's inward state of sincerity that defines one's intentions in the performance of these actions, in this case *jihād*, as being genuinely for God rather than for vanity or ulterior motives related to worldly interests. The following *ḥadīth* in Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Jihād* demonstrates this clearly:

People who fight for the sake of God were mentioned in the presence of 'Abdallāh [Ibn al-Mubārak]. He then said: "They are not as you assume and see. When the two armies meet the angels descend. And people are

recorded based on their ranks. So and so fights for the world. So and so fights for wealth. So and so fights for fame and its like. And so and so fights sincerely seeking the pleasure of God. Whoever fights sincerely seeking the pleasure of God, then he is in paradise.”⁵⁸

To begin *ḥadīth* texts with *ḥadīths* related to intentions is a tradition that was continued by numerous *ḥadīth* scholars such al-Bukhārī in his *Jāmiʿ* and al-Nawawī in his *Riyāḍ al-ṣāliḥīn*. Ibn al-Mubārak’s choice to begin his *Kitāb al-Jihād* with *ḥadīths* related to intentions was deliberate and is significant to our understanding of his thought process. Aside from demonstrating the emphasis the early Muslim community placed on both inward and outward piety, the fact that this *ḥadīth* is not a prophetic one but rather words that are attributed to one of the Companions of the Prophet demonstrates the authoritative power of the Companions and the early figures of piety. This is evident in the conceptualization of the *sunna*, which is not limited to the words of the Prophet himself but also includes those of the pious figures that the Muslim community recognized as embodiments of the prophetic *ḥadīths*. This is related to the acceptance of the acts (*ʿamal*) of the people of Medina, which the Mālikī school of Islamic law in particular regarded as representing a form of “*ḥadīth*” itself and the idea that Muslims should follow not only the *sunna* of the Prophet but that of the Companions. The Companions were regarded as personifications of the *ḥadīth* tradition since their source of authority and status was ultimately derived from their relationship to the Prophet and was not independent of this. This is also related to a Sunnī conception of the probity of the Companions, in which it is believed that even though the Companions of the Prophet were not infallible or immune to error, their association with the Prophet left an impression on them that was profound enough to prevent them from lying about the Prophet. This is in contrast to what many partisans of ‘Alī believed about the character of the Companions. Thus, in Ibn al-Mubārak’s *Kitāb al-Jihād* we find a manifestation of a proto-Sunnī perspective that was in part defined by its perception of the early Muslim community.

Another *ḥadīth* in Ibn al-Mubārak’s book with many layers of information about the early Muslim period is the following:

The Messenger of God sent an army in which was ‘Abdallāh b. al-Rawāḥa. The army left and ‘Abdallāh b. al-Rawāḥa remained behind to pray with the Messenger of God. After the Prophet completed his prayer he said, “O Ibn al-Rawāḥa, are you not in the army?” He said, “Yes, O Messenger of God. But I wanted to take part in the prayer with you. I know their

⁵⁸ Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Jihād*, 34.

location and I can catch up with them.” [The Prophet] said, “By the One in whose hands is my soul, if you spent all that is in the earth [in charity] you would not be able to recompense the value of their departure” [i.e., what you lost by not departing with them].⁵⁹

Ibn al-Mubārak’s choice to include this *ḥadīth* in his work on *jihād* is significant on many levels. First it linked the participation in martial pursuits with those that took place during the time of Prophet himself. This continuity is also clear in the many reports related to other aspects of *jihād* and warfare that occurred during the lifetime of the Prophet. If sending armies to expand Muslim influence was a pursuit that the Prophet himself partook in, then the *jihād* of Ibn al-Mubārak and his circle of fighters expanding into Byzantine territory would have been regarded as a continuation of the prophetic legacy rather than a new practice unique to a later period.

Second, the focus of this *ḥadīth* is not warfare per se but rather on the importance of setting priorities and fulfilling responsibilities. That is, the fulfillment of one’s obligation had even greater rank than what this Companion naturally inclined toward, which was remaining in proximity to the Prophet. The type of vision that is reflected in the text of Ibn al-Mubārak’s *Kitāb al-Jihād* provides a window onto the perceptions of the early Muslim community, in terms of setting priorities, participating in the Muslim army, and the continuity from the prophetic period to the late second/eighth century.

This perception of continuity of the *jihād* of the second/eighth century figures from the prophetic period is also reflected in the organization of Ibn al-Mubārak’s text in which the references to battles appear chronologically starting with the lifetime of the Prophet. In addition, Ibn al-Mubārak selected a limited number from the numerous narratives of battles that the Prophet and his Companions participated in. It is quite significant that this is the framework in which he chooses to construct his book.

Similarly, we see references to events of the battle of Uḥud, during which the Prophet fell in a ditch and his Companions underwent a dangerous mission to rescue him.⁶⁰ There is also mention of Ṭalḥa b. ‘Ubaydallāh who is reported by his son to have had either “37 or 75” wounds on his body that included head injuries and lost fingers after the battle of Uḥud.⁶¹ Ṭalḥa was among the group that opposed ‘Alī in the battle of the camel, thus the inclusion of this *ḥadīth* in the text once again reflects the proto-Sunnī perspective of the Companions.

59 Ibid., 36–37.

60 Ibid., 81.

61 Ibid., 84.

The prophetic biography or *sīra* was key to the way in which the fighters on the frontier envisioned themselves. They did not see the concept of martial valor as a new virtue that arose in relation to the Byzantines, rather they believed their roles on the battlefield were in emulation of what was established by the earliest community around the Prophet.

In the *Kitāb al-Jihād* Ibn al-Mubārak quotes Qurʾān verses related to combat and interprets them in the context of the importance of *jihād*. The second *ḥadīth* cited relates to verses that specifically refer to the merits of combat.

Muḥammad b. Jaḥāda relates that Abū Ṣāliḥ said: They said if only we knew which deeds were of the most merit and most loved to God. The following was revealed, “O you who believe, shall I not guide you to a transaction that will save you from a grave punishment? Believe in God and His Messenger and fight for the sake of God with your bodies and your wealth.” They disliked this. So [the following was revealed, “O you who believe, why do you say that which you do not do? Great is the hatred in the sight of God that you say what you do not do. Indeed, God loves those who fight in His cause in a row as though they are a [single] structure joined firmly.”]⁶²

In another variation of this story Mujāhid gives the following reason for the revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) of these verses (“Why do you say that which you do not do?” up to “in a row as though they are a [single] structure joined firmly”), he says:

There was a group from the Anṣār, among whom was ‘Abdallāh b. al-Rawāḥa, who said in a gathering “If only we knew which deeds were most beloved to God, we would have performed them until we die.” When [these] verses were revealed, Ibn al-Rawāḥa said, “I will remain captive to [fighting] for the sake of God until I die.” Hence he died a martyr.⁶³

Similarly, the verse “God has purchased from the believers their souls and wealth in exchange for paradise,”⁶⁴ is said to have been quoted by Qatāda, who then said “the price was set by God and hence made expensive.”⁶⁵ The inclusion of references to Qurʾān verses related to combat in the very first *ḥadīths*

62 Qurʾān, 61:2–3.

63 Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Jihād*, 30.

64 Qurʾān, 9:111.

65 Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Jihād*, 30.

cited in the *Kitāb al-Jihād* reflects the perception of the early Muslims, whose actions to promote Muslim expansion were motivated by their faith.

The comparison between participation in *jihād* and worship is another theme we see throughout Ibn al-Mubārak's text. The Prophet is quoted as having said, "The likeness of the one fighting for the sake of God—and God is most knowledgeable of who fights for His sake—is like the one who stands in prayer with presence of heart, fasting, prostrating, and kneeling."⁶⁶ As noted, Ibn al-Mubārak was known for a poem attributed to him which claims that participation in guarding the frontier or *jihād* is superior to performing non-obligatory pilgrimages. This theme, that *jihād* is either superior to worship or equivalent to extensive worship, is prevalent throughout Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Jihād*. Abū Hurayra is quoted as having asked, "Is there any one of you that can stand in prayer without resting or fast without eating as long as he is alive?" Those around him said, "O Abū Hurayra, who is capable of this?" He answered, "By the One in whose hand is my soul, one day of a fighter for the sake of God is better than this."⁶⁷

In addition to the perception that *jihād* is comparable to worship, *jihād* itself is infused with a sense of spirituality. Abū l-Dardā' is quoted as having advised others to "do good deeds before battle, because you fight through your deeds."⁶⁸ Regardless of whether this quote is in fact the words of Abū l-Dardā', its inclusion reflects a unique belief that success on the battlefield was viewed as ultimately related to one's success in his relationship with God. The following longer *ḥadīth* attributed to 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar further elucidates this perspective.

Fighters are divided into two groups. One group sets out remembering God effusively, reminding others of Him, avoiding corruption during their journey, giving generously to their companions, and spending from the noble [parts] of their wealth; they are more desirous of [the reward] of spending their wealth than benefiting from the world. When they are in the land of combat their awe of God is so great that they avoid wrongdoing [even] in faraway lands. If they are capable of misconduct, they purify their hearts and actions from it. Hence, Satan is unable to test them nor speak to their hearts. It is through them that God grants victory to His religion and subdues His enemy. As for the second group, they set out without remembering God much or reminding others, nor do they avoid corruption, nor are they generous with their companions, nor do

66 Ibid., 35.

67 Ibid., 70.

68 Ibid., 30.

they spend their wealth without hating to do it [i.e., they hate to spend their wealth]. They see whatever they spend out of their wealth as burdensome. And so Satan causes them to become depressed. When they are in the land of combat they are among the lowest of the low and the most wretched of the wretched ones. They seek refuge on a hilltop eyeing what the people are doing. If God gives success to the Muslims they are the most vocal ones to lie. They dare to usurp [what is not theirs] against God's [permission] and the devil tells them that this is booty. If they are afflicted with ease they become arrogant. They do not have any part of the reward of the believers. They are physically present and travel on a path similar to theirs but they are completely separate in their actions and their [inner] world. God will gather them all on the Day of Judgment and then separate them.⁶⁹

This longer *ḥadīth* attributed to an important Companion of the Prophet demonstrates the sense of spirituality that was necessary during war: it was the remembrance of God and virtuous conduct that led to martial success. There is also an emphasis on ethical conduct during war. It is significant that these aspects of warfare—the ethics of war—were considered and written of at such an early period of Islamic history.

After setting the stage of the *Kitāb al-Jihād* with verses from the Qur'an, narratives of events from the life of the Prophet, and *ḥadīth* from the Companions, Ibn al-Mubārak's progresses to a later era in which he includes informative anecdotes, quotes, and narratives from the period of expansion following the death of the Prophet.

There is a narrative that reveals the dynamics of the relationship between Abū Bakr and Bilāl al-Ḥabashī who left Medina after the Prophet's death and eventually died in Syria. Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab reports:

During the caliphate of Abū Bakr, Bilāl prepared himself to set out for Syria. Upon this, Abū Bakr said, "I do not like to see you leave us in this way. If only you would stay with us and assist us." Bilāl responded, "If you freed me for the sake of God, then allow me to set out for the sake of God. But if you freed me for yourself then keep me imprisoned by your side." Hence he granted him leave. And so he set out for Syria and died there.⁷⁰

Throughout the text we see similar reports that reveal relationships between major Companions of the Prophet and personal anecdotes that reflect their

69 Ibid., 32–34.

70 Ibid., 92.

character. For example, the following report reveals Khālīd b. al-Walīd's disappointment at not dying on the battlefield. Ibn Wā'il reports:

When I was present at the death of Khālīd b. Walīd, he said [before dying] "I ardently desired to die a martyr but I was not able to die except on my bed. And there is nothing more loved to me after *lā ilāha illa Allāh* except that I spend a night mounted on my horse. And the sky calls out to me, 'Await the morning so that we meet the disbelievers.'" He then said, "If I die take my sword and horse and donate it for the sake of God."⁷¹

Similarly 'Ikrima, the son of Abū Jahl, wished to die a martyr to compensate for his father's role as one of the most vehement enemies of the Prophet. Thābit al-Banānī reported that:

'Ikrima b. Abū Jahl readied himself for battle one day. Khālīd b. al-Walīd said, "Do not do this. Your death will be a hardship for the Muslims." He said, "Leave me alone, O Khālīd. For you have a [positive] past with the Prophet while I and my father were his worst enemies. So he set out until he was killed."⁷²

Both Khālīd's and 'Ikrima's conversion to Islam appears to have been seen as an unexpected victory for the Muslims in a *ḥadīth* that follows the one above. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥārith reports that the Messenger of God said: I saw in my dream [someone like] Abū Jahl coming and giving me allegiance. When Khālīd b. al-Walīd converted to Islam it was said, "Your dream came true, O Messenger of God. This was about the conversion of Khālīd." He said, "Perhaps it is about someone else." Thereupon 'Ikrima b. Abū Jahl converted and this was the manifestation of his dream.⁷³

In the context of many of the crucial battles of the early Muslim expansion the *Kitāb al-Jihād* refers to many of the early Muslims. Muḥammad b. al-Aswad b. Khalaf b. Bayāḍa al-Khuzā'ī reported:

We were sitting among a group of people from the Quraysh at the sanctuary when it was said that 'Amr b. al-Āṣ came back from Egypt that evening. We heard him enter and we saw him. After he [finished] circumambulating the Ka'ba he entered the sanctuary and prayed two units of prayer. He then said, "It is as though you were speaking about

⁷¹ Ibid., 61.

⁷² Ibid., 62.

⁷³ Ibid., 62.

me.” The people said, “We did not say anything except what is good. We compared you and Hishām. Some of us said, ‘This one is better.’ Others said ‘this one is better.’” ‘Amr said, “I will tell you about this. We both converted to Islam, we loved the Prophet, and were loyal to him. He recollected the day of Yarmūk. He then said, he took to fighting in Fuṣṭāt until he was washed, wrapped, and buried. Then we were presented to God the praised and exalted. He accepted him and so he is better than me—he repeated this three times. He accepted him and so he is better than me. He accepted him and so he is better than me.”⁷⁴

By itself, this report reveals limited information, but in the context of the two reports preceding it, we can see its import. In each of the three reports Hishām and ‘Amr, who were brothers, are compared. ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ is the better known of the two brothers; before Islam he was a formidable opponent of the Muslims and after his conversion he was given the garrison town of Fuṣṭāt to govern. The earlier report specifically mentions that they were brothers and that they both participated in Yarmūk. ‘Amr survived and Hishām died in this battle. Hence, the reference to God’s acceptance of Hishām is clarified by the references to the other reports. One of the other reports also gives a more detailed account of the nature of the armies in the battle of Yarmūk, where the Muslims were outnumbered and preferred to wait for reinforcements, but Hishām urged them on, saying, “If you know that victory comes from God then fight the army. If you believe that victory is from Abū Bakr, then ride your horses until we meet him [i.e., wait].” Hishām was killed in the battle and one of the Muslims who later saw his body said, “May God have mercy on you. This is what you sought.” There is also mention of their confronting an army of Byzantines and Arab Christians who were led by a priest. The second *ḥadīth* focuses on the comparison between ‘Amr and Hishām and only mentions the battle of Yarmūk in passing.

The third report mentions that the battle of Yarmūk was discussed without elucidating further. While the accuracy of the information in these reports may not be clear, the format of the report seems to indicate a genuine attempt to transmit events. Hence, as Bonner mentions reading these reports and taking general information is useful while leaving the details of these reports as pending or unconfirmed information is a balanced approach to using this text.

Moreover, regardless of their historical accuracy these reports reveal cultural norms, attitudes, and perspectives that reflect historical context. For instance, we see a perspective that is consistent with the other reports in the

74 Ibid., 100.

book, in which martyrdom is both glorified and sanctified as an expression of Islamic piety. This also indicates the role of the early battles in motivating the second/eighth-century Muslims who perceived themselves to be following in the footsteps of their pious ancestors. Furthermore, we see the emphasis on strict ethical conduct, such as the protecting the sanctity of the lives of noncombatants and the lands they passed through, that these early Muslims believed was conditional to success on the battlefield.

We also see reports mentioning other major battles such as Yamāma and Qādisiyya. ‘Ubaydallāh reports:

On the Day of Yamāma I passed Thābit b. Qays b. Shammās and I said to him: "O uncle, do you not see what the Muslims are faced with while you are here?" He smiled and said: "Now my nephew." He put on his armor and rode his horse until he reached the frontlines. He said to them: "*Uff* to you and what you do."⁷⁵ Then he said to the enemy, "*Uff* to you and what you worship." He let his horse charge until he met the enemy. He persevered and fought until he was killed.⁷⁶

This report does not provide a legal ruling nor is it about a major historical event. One wonders why Ibn al-Mubārak chose to include this in the text. While there is no clear answer, we know that first, it maintains the continuity that has been seen from the beginning of the text. It seems appropriate to include some sort of report about all the major battles. Second, the report seems to indicate that the fighter is either middle-aged or elderly, and is impatient to participate in the battle, thus it emphasizes the importance of *jihād* and martyrdom at this early period.

Another report which may be apocryphal reflects a sense of heroism associated with a desire to continue fighting despite heavy wounds. ‘Awn b. ‘Abdallāh reported that on the day of Qādisiyya he passed a man who had been wounded, whose intestines had spilled out. He told those who passed him to tie back what had bulged out of him so that he could continue fighting for the sake of God. He said, "So he tied him and he threw a spear or two."⁷⁷ Surely a text on warfare would be incomplete without stories of valor and bravery during battle.

We also see references to the Umayyads in Ibn al-Mubārak's text. In what appears to be a veiled criticism of ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abd al-Malik's lack of reliance on God. Abū ‘Anba al-Khawlanī reported that one day they were in the gath-

75 To say "*uff*" to someone was an expression of disdain and disrespect.

76 Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Jihād*, 103.

77 Ibid., 111.

ering of Khawlān sitting in the mosque and ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abd al-Malik came out, trying to escape the plague. So he asked about him and was told that he came out to escape from the plague. He then said:

From God we came and to Him we return (*innā lillāh wa-innā ilayhi rāji‘ūn*). I did not think I would live to see this. Should I not tell you of the state that your brothers were in? First, meeting God the exalted is dearer to them than life. Second, they do not fear the enemy, whether they are many or few. Third, they do not fear poverty. They are confident that God will provide for them. Fourth, if plague afflicts their [area] they do not leave until God’s decree for them has passed.⁷⁸

Thus in Ibn al-Mubārak’s *Kitāb al-Jihād* we find a plethora of references and information that provide valuable historical insight into the early Islamic period and the prevalent perceptions of martial pursuits by the early Muslims. We also find other related information, such as the veiled criticism of the Umayyads in the above quote, the continuity the Muslims perceived between their battles of the second/eighth century and the early battles of the Prophet, and an emphasis on the ethics of warfare.

78 Ibid., 110.

Ibn al-Mubārak and His *Zuhd*

What is *Zuhd*?

Al-Dhahabī described Ibn al-Mubārak as the “exemplar of the practitioners of *zuhd* and their leader” (*qudwat al-zāhidīn wa-imāmihim*).¹ Al-Shaʿrānī called him the “crown of the worshipers and people of *zuhd*.”² He was cited as being the first to write a book of *zuhd* and thus begin a genre of books of *zuhd* (*kutub al-zuhd*) and it was reported that he was rendered speechless “like an ox after slaughter” when reading his book of *zuhd*.³ It is rare to read an entry on Ibn al-Mubārak in biographical dictionaries without a reference to his distinction as a man of *zuhd*.

What then is *zuhd*? What do the references which link Ibn al-Mubārak to *zuhd* mean? This is precisely the question which Leah Kinberg attempts to answer in her article, “What is Meant by *Zuhd*.”⁴ In her article, Kinberg emphasizes the importance of using the term *zuhd* within its own historical context. She argues that many assert that practitioners of *zuhd* were emulating practices that were prevalent among Christian ascetics because the word *zuhd* is commonly defined as “asceticism” and not used within the parameters of the Islamic tradition. Kinberg writes, “... It seems that there is an incompatibility between the foreign and Arabic terms due to the fact that one term used in one society cannot give a clear idea of another term used in another society.”⁵

Indeed Ofer Livne-Kafri makes this assumption of an inherent analogy between Christian monasticism and the Islamic concept of *zuhd*.⁶ Livne-Kafri argues that asceticism was a phenomenon that appeared early on in the Islamic tradition as a result of Christian monastic influences on Muslims

1 al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 1:202.

2 ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. Aḥmad al-Shaʿrānī, *Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Maktab Muḥammad al-Malījī, 1897), 1:52. The literal wording is *ʿarūs al-ʿubbād wa-l-zuhhād* or “bride of the worshipers and people of *zuhd*.” I have translated the word as “crown” since it is closer to the intended meaning.

3 al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 1:203.

4 Leah Kinberg, “What is Meant by *Zuhd*?” *Studia Islamica* 61 (1985), 27–44.

5 Ibid., 28.

6 Ofer Kafri-Livne, “Early Muslim Ascetics and the World of Christian Monasticism,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996): 105–129.

in the region of greater Syria. He bases his assumptions primarily on what he regards as similarities between Christian monasticism and Islamic asceticism as well as on a number of anecdotes from primary sources which appear to depict some form of contact between the figures he categorizes as Muslim ascetics and Christian monks. While he cites Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* as a form of the ascetic literature that "reflects Jewish and Christian traditions," he does not study the actual contents of this work to support his premise.

The greatest weakness of Livne-Kafri's article is its failure to define the Arabo-Islamic term *zuhd* within its own context. He translates *zuhd* as asceticism without regard to variations in meanings in the context of the Islamic tradition. While there were certainly forms of *zuhd* practiced that were similar to and likely influenced by Christian monasticism, it is a generalization based on selective evidence to assume that the overarching principles of *zuhd* were analogous to asceticism in the Christian monastic tradition. This assumption also fails to depict the diverse ways the ideal of *zuhd* was practiced by various Muslim figures, and the diversity of views of ascetic practices in the Christian tradition itself.

Kinberg offers a more nuanced approach to defining *zuhd* by asserting that the term has both a specific and a general definition. This is common for many Islamic terms, which have lexical meanings as well as meanings that are specific to a particular context. She notes that van Ess argues that the term *zuhd* can be more accurately defined in the context of its lexical meaning as "the renunciation of worldly delights" or *zuhd fī l-dunyā*.⁷ She argues that this definition is more concise than the vague and overly generalized word "asceticism" used by Goldziher, Nicholson, and Massignon.⁸ She argues that while van Ess's initial definition of the term *zuhd* may be accurate when used in a specific context that underscores its lexical meaning, she goes on to argue that there must also be a wider definition of *zuhd* that includes many other more specific ethical principles. This is important to our study of Ibn al-Mubārak because he uses the term *zuhd* in his *Kitāb al-Zuhd* in precisely this way: he covers a vast array of positive traits that he regards as elements of Islamic piety.

7 Kinberg, "What is Meant by *Zuhd*?", 28. Also cf. Ignác Goldziher and Bernard Lewis, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 141; Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), 3–4; Louis Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997).

8 Kinberg, "What is Meant by *Zuhd*?", 27.

Kinberg has defined *zuhd* by analyzing first-century references to it and using these to formulate a general definition. She argues that based on the combination of ways in which *zuhd* is defined and referred to in Islamic texts, we can conclude that they “make up an entire way of conduct.”⁹ Kinberg writes, “... I propose to break from the narrow boundaries in which *zuhd* is usually delimited by claiming that *zuhd* is the philosophy of life inherent in Islam according to which any Muslim who considers himself pious—no matter what religious current he thinks he belongs to—must behave.”¹⁰

After looking at an array of references to *zuhd* in the classical texts and the ways they are linked to other principles of pious conduct such as *waraʿ* (scrupulousness regarding what is impermissible), *tawakkul* (reliance on God), and *riḍā* (contentment with one's lot in life), she concludes that “*zuhd*, in the pious Islamic milieu, should be understood as a general way of conduct, or simply as ethics.”¹¹ Her article provides an important point for our study of Ibn al-Mubārak and with his writings and practice of *zuhd*. Regarding Ibn al-Mubarak's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* from this perspective as a book of pious moral conduct also helps us to see its connection to later books of piety that developed into the Islamic science of *taṣawwuf*. I elaborate on this further in this study.

In his article on “mild asceticism,” Hurvitz demonstrates that there were different trends within the Muslim community that differed in their practice of “asceticism.”¹² There is the category of “extreme asceticism,” which he asserts is depicted in the life of figures such as Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. 161/777) who abandoned his family life to live as an ascetic, or Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) who practiced what Hurvitz refers to as “the alchemy of hunger”: he engaged in extended fasts of three days and experienced constant hunger as a form of piety. There is also the category of “mild asceticism” in which ascetics condemned “worldliness” without shunning the world itself. Hurvitz cites both Ibn al-Mubārak and Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ as examples of this form of asceticism. For Hurvitz, mild asceticism, like Kinberg's *zuhd*, was a “particular ethical outlook” whose “ideals were manifested in actual behavior.” He goes on to say, “... that these ideals and practices became the predominant ethical outlook and code of conduct among the *ulamāʾ* and a large segment of the society that looked up to them.”¹³ This difference in the early practice of piety

9 Ibid., 29.

10 Ibid., 29.

11 Ibid., 44.

12 Hurvitz, “Biographies and Mild Asceticism.”

13 Ibid., 42.

is dealt with in greater detail in Alexander Knysh's work, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*.¹⁴

Knysh makes a similar distinction in what he refers to as “devotional styles” practiced by early pious figures. He depicts three main trends of pious practice that are embodied in the figures of Ibrāhīm b. Adham, Ibn al-Mubārak, and Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyāḍ. Knysh lays the background for what he calls asceticism preceding the era of these three figures by demonstrating the way in which many Muslim figures who were either converts to Islam from the Judeo-Christian tradition or happened to live in regions heavily influenced by Christian monks practiced a form of asceticism that was reflective of eastern Christian monasticism.

Notably, Knysh talks about Farqad al-Sabakhī who was originally an Armenian Christian before converting to Islam. He used to quote Jesus and the Torah in his sermons. Furthermore, his wearing of wool was received with criticism by a Kufan who was quoted as saying that it reflected traces of Christianity. This indicates that wearing wool in this early period was perceived as being antithetical to the Prophet's example, as he wore cotton. Knysh writes that Ibn Sīrīn (d. 110/728) also confirmed the view that wearing wool was a reflection of Christian monasticism which contradicted the prophetic model. Sufyān al-Thawrī was also depicted as having regarded this practice with contempt; he claimed it to be both a sign of ostentation and an innovation (*bid'a*) to religious practice.¹⁵

This disagreement over wearing wool depicted in the early second/eighth century is significant because it lays the groundwork for the various devotional styles that were prevalent by Ibn al-Mubārak's time. While we see that there were forms of piety that appear to have been influenced by some forms of Christian monasticism, we also see that these forms of piety were heavily criticized. Figures such as Sufyān al-Thawrī, a primary mentor of Ibn al-Mubārak and someone revered for his piety and his scholarship, were influential in shaping the Muslim perception of the “proper” demonstration of Islamic piety; indeed he had a crucial role in the network of scholars known as *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā'a*. As discussed in chapter 2, this network of scholars had a significant role in formative period of Sunnī Islam. Their endorsement of scholars and practices ensured acceptance by the common masses while their disapproval was equally damning.

Ibrāhīm b. Adham represents the first devotional style of the second/eighth century, a style that Knysh describes as “extreme world-renouncing

14 Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 18–22.

15 For the author's detailed discussion of the summarized description above see, Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 14–15.

piety.”¹⁶ Having abandoned kingship in pursuit of a life devoted to God, he is said to have shunned the company of people and chosen to be a vagabond. A common theme referenced in accounts of the lives of pious figures in hagiographical literature and in many other works is the importance of acquiring a “pure source of wealth” from which to receive sustenance. Ibn Adham is said to have eaten clay and sand when he could not find food from lawful earnings and ironically earned his fame in the world by shunning it. Ibn Adham regarded both food and social interaction as pollutants to the soul. Knysh summarizes Ibn Adham’s approach to piety in the following way:

Paradoxically, Ibrāhīm’s radical aversion to the world and its inhabitants, his voluntary poverty and the divine wisdom that he achieved through spectacular deprivations gained him the popularity that he had been so anxious to avoid. In spite of his fear of publicity, he acquired a wide and enthusiastic following who aspired to emulate his stringent ways. These “devotees of harsh worship” formed a recognizable group whose obsession with purity, to the extent of identifying the supererogatory as the norm, set them apart not only from the Muslim community at large but from the other ascetics of the frontier as well.¹⁷

Ibn al-Mubārak was regarded as an ideal for what may be called a more sober and moderate trend of piety that did not detach itself from the world completely. He was known for his valor in battle at the front against the Byzantines, but also for his scholarly achievements. He was a wealthy merchant and a scholar who traveled far and wide. Because he spent extended periods at the Byzantine front, he knew of ascetics who followed forms of harsh self-deprivation, and his form of *zuhd* was clearly in opposition to their piety that comes from shunning the world. Fred Donner offers a detailed account of the milieu of Christian ascetics in the period contemporary to Ibn al-Mubārak’s era.

Piety was not, of course, a concept unknown in the Near East in Muḥammad’s day ... Late antique Christian piety, which has been the most intensively studied by modern scholarship, was marked by powerful ascetic tendencies. The most sensational practitioners of this ascetic regimen subjected themselves to extremes of bodily mortification and self-denial, rooted in the concept that all earthly desires were but snares that endangered the soul’s eventual chances for salvation by making the individual less mindful of God. Sexual desire was strictly controlled or suppressed

16 Ibid., 19.

17 Ibid., 20.

(in some cases even self-castration). Eating and sleeping were considered necessary evils, and were reduced to the minimum needed to sustain life; food was taken in small quantities chosen for its unsavory qualities, and sleep was given up in exchange for long vigils in prayer. Even normal social contact was abandoned in the solitary, dour pursuit of spiritual salvation ...¹⁸

Interestingly, it was Ibn al-Mubārak and not the likes of Ibn Adham who wrote the earliest known work on *zuhd*, a work that defines its ideals and sets a precedent for a series of other *kutub al-zuhd*. Ibn al-Mubārak's work became an indispensable source for analyzing the way piety in the early Muslim period was viewed.

Finally, we see in the figure of Fuḍayl b. 'Iyāḍ an emphasis on sadness and the fear of God. Fuḍayl is said to have continuously exhibited a sad demeanor due to his sins and fear of punishment in the hereafter. Knysh notes that Fuḍayl was portrayed as having smiled only once in his life, and this was when his son died.¹⁹ The death of his son was probably regarded as an opportunity to receive God's forgiveness and compassion as well as a heavenly abode for his son. Though he was known as a figure with great fear of God and His punishment, he encouraged his followers to earn a lawful livelihood rather than beg or rely on others. He also did not condemn wealth and the ownership of property. But unlike Ibn al-Mubārak, Fuḍayl was not a member of the religious establishment made up of a network of scholars, though he is presented in biographical dictionaries as having had a close relationship with Sufyān al-Thawrī and Ibn al-Mubārak, as discussed previously. Thus there is no indication of an inherent tension between Fuḍayl's mode of devotion and the scholarly community. Knysh notes that there was indeed tension between the first group of excessive ascetics who were often accused of spreading pious tales (without sufficiently checking their sources or the authenticity of the material they cited) to encourage the common people to a life of piety. The excessive ascetics regarded the scholarly circle who made a career of their religious learning with suspicion; the former felt that benefiting materially from religious knowledge was a questionable practice.²⁰ Ultimately, it was the scholarly Sunnī establishment that defined mainstream Islamic piety; they did this through the power of their written works and the moderation of their practice. These were more acceptable and accessible to the common people than the methods of self-deprivation practiced by the extreme ascetics.

18 Donner, *Narratives*, 70.

19 Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 23.

20 Ibid., 22.

Ibn al-Mubārak: The Rich Ascetic

Before we analyze Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, we must first look at the way Ibn al-Mubārak's own practice of *zuhd* was portrayed in the classical Islamic texts. Again, while we cannot ascertain the accuracy of all the statements about Ibn al-Mubārak, the overall consistency of the portrayal of his stances and views enables us to establish a general understanding of Ibn al-Mubārak's pious practices. Even where accounts are embellished, as noted earlier, there is a significance to the way that figures are portrayed. For example, Ibn al-Mubārak and Ibn Adham have consistent differences from each other in the way the sources depict them that enable us to assume that the overall character and worldviews of these figures were reflected even in the way later writers may have chosen to embellish one character's story in way that differs from the other.

The most noteworthy characteristic of Ibn al-Mubārak was his wealth. In contrast to the vagabond ascetics or the wandering "holy men" of Late Antiquity,²¹ Ibn al-Mubārak was a wealthy merchant known for his many travels and pilgrimages to Mecca, and also for covering the expenses of his companions while traveling.²²

Another report adds that after Ibn al-Mubārak's last pilgrimage, he invited his guest to dinner and offered them twenty-five trays of sweets.²³ These descriptions of Ibn al-Mubārak stand in stark contrast to the descriptions of the more extreme ascetics. First, we find that Ibn al-Mubārak must have been financially well off to have been so generous with his travel companions, particularly to cover all of their expenses. The way he hosted his guests and travel companions and fulfilled the gift requests of their families indicates that he did not see an inherent contradiction between piety and enjoyment of the delights of the world such as good food. Though other reports indicate that he used to feed others while he himself fasted, the fact that he encouraged those around him to eat and paid for them to do so implies an attitude of *zuhd* that did not see food and drink as necessary evils. Second, he did not live in isolation from people but rather allowed others to keep his company.

Another report by al-Ḥasan b. al-Rabī' states that he accompanied Ibn al-Mubārak on a journey from Marv to Baghdad, and he never saw Ibn

21 Peter Brown has a detailed account of his theory that the period of Late Antiquity saw a rise of saint like figures which he calls "holy men." See "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80–101.

22 See pp. 17–18 of this work.

23 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 10:158. The word here is *falūdhaj*, which is a sweet made of flour and sugar.

al-Mubārak eat a meal without inviting a guest to eat with him. He stated that Ibn al-Mubārak said, “It amazes me that all of the reciters of the Qur’ān [have faces] gleaming with laughter. As for those people I have met who meet me with a frown, as though they have criticisms to make of you, God has not made many reciters of the Qur’ān from among them.”²⁴ In fact this statement is a profound indication of Ibn al-Mubārak’s understanding of a pious demeanor. At a time when it was common and many early pious figures considered it praiseworthy to maintain a constant state of sadness and sobriety, such that they acquired the label *al-bakkā’in* or “the weepers,” Ibn al-Mubārak praised this association between Qur’ān reciters and their cheerful and happy demeanors. Ibn al-Mubārak’s position is in perfect alignment with many prophetic *ḥadīths* that enjoin smiling and its status as a form of charity toward one’s fellow believers, who should be met with a cheerful face. Furthermore, al-Ḥasan b. al-Rabīʿ is quoted as having said:

We had never seen *al-zamaward* (a food made with meat and eggs) except with Ibn al-Mubārak in Kufa. He used to buy food and invite the people of *ḥadīth*. He then spread a cloth and put clothes lengthwise so that it can be eaten upon. He used to take rolled up [sweets of] *falūdḥaj* and feed it to the people of *ḥadīth*.²⁵

Ibn al-Mubārak was also known to order two carriages full of food for his invitations and it is said that he would order roast chicken and sweets.²⁶ The summaries of all of these anecdotes indicate that Ibn al-Mubārak was rich and spent his wealth generously without apprehension about the enjoyment of food and drink.

When asked to define *zuhd*, Ibn al-Mubārak was said to have replied: “It is having trust in God while loving poverty.”²⁷ In another important quote Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyād is said to have asked Ibn al-Mubārak:

“You command us to practice *zuhd*, [possess] little, and have restraint and yet you come with merchandise? How is this?”
He said, “O Abū ‘Alī, I do this to maintain my dignity (*li-aṣūn wajhī*), protect my honor (*li-akrim ‘arḍī*), and be assisted through it to worship

24 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, 11:514.

25 Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Taqdimat al-maʿrifa*, 1:277. Also see al-Bukhārī, *ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak*, 45.

26 al-Bukhārī, *ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak*, 44.

27 al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, trans. Rabia Harris, *The Risalah: Principles of Sufism* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 2002), 295.

my Lord.” He [Fuḍayl] said, “O Ibn al-Mubārak, how excellent is this if it remains as this.”²⁸

In these quotes we see the essence of Ibn al-Mubārak’s attitude toward the world. In the first quote when he is asked to define *zuhd fī l-dunyā* (used in its lexical sense in this context) he defined it through the possession of a certain attitude rather than a physical quality of having or not having wealth. Ibn al-Mubārak’s perspective was that one should live in the world without being worldly. In fact, this would also mean that it is possible to possess nothing and live in abject poverty as practiced by some of the ascetics of his time and yet be engrossed in one’s attachment and desire for the world in one’s heart. According to Ibn al-Mubārak, true *zuhd* is to “love poverty” or to not desire the world even though one may be as wealthy as he was and live among people and engage in social intercourse with them. This emphasis on the heart and its traits is something we see throughout his *Kitāb al-Zuhd* and was a precursor to later formalized writings which focus on the science of the inner self and eventually evolved into the field that would be known as *taṣawwuf*, or Sufism.

Ibn al-Mubārak’s answer to Fuḍayl’s question about his possession of wealth is a famous quote attributed to Ibn al-Mubārak; it recurs in a number of entries on him in various classical texts. In his answer, Ibn al-Mubārak describes a positive of relationship between the possession of wealth and faith. This is once again a notable contrast from the perspective that regards wealth as a pollutant to faith. Ibn al-Mubārak reasoned that his access to wealth enabled him to preserve his dignity; he used the phrase *li-aṣūn wajhī*, which implies the preservation of self-respect that comes from not being in need of other people’s charity. We can thus infer his disapproving view of the begging that was practiced by some ascetics. In contrast, he saw work and trade as the more appropriate approach to pious practice.

The next phrase, *li-akrim ‘arḍī*, is translated above as “to protect my honor.” In Arabic the word *‘arḍ* implies a specific type of honor, namely one that pertains to the modesty of one’s self and one’s family. The word *akrim* used here also has a dual meaning of honor and generosity in material provision. Hence, the second reason Ibn al-Mubārak offers for his gainful employment relates to the protection of his family honor by being able to provide for them and make them independent from needing the help of non-family members.

Finally, his third justification for using wealth to assist him in obedience to God was expressed in another profound statement that reveals a way of thinking that differs from that of many austere ascetics. He refers to a support (*‘awn*) that he derived from possessing wealth. By being financially

²⁸ al-Dhahabī, *Ṣiḡar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, 8:387.

independent, he was freed from the distraction that comes from the anxiety of supporting himself and his family and was thus free to worship God. He was also able to travel in search of *ḥadīths* easily since he had the income to do so, perform the pilgrimage multiple times, and spend in charity. Ibn al-Mubārak's practice of writing down *ḥadīth* was costly—paper and ink were expensive and his wealth was a means to support this endeavor.

One characteristic Ibn al-Mubārak did have in common with other ascetics is his avoidance of fame. He was cited as saying that drawing attention to one's *zuhd* is in itself a breach of *zuhd*. Al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan al-Marwazī reported that Ibn al-Mubārak said: "Be a lover of obscurity and a hater of fame. Do not show others that you love obscurity, for you will elevate your ego. And calling attention to your *zuhd* is a form of leaving *zuhd* because you invite admiration and praise."²⁹ Here *zuhd* here is used differently than in the earlier quote that refers to *al-zuhd fī l-dunyā*. In this case, drawing attention to oneself engenders pride and arrogance, which is antithetical to *zuhd*. Hence, for Ibn al-Mubārak *zuhd* does not refer to abstinence from the world, but rather qualities such as humility, which are regarded as elements of an overarching manifestation of *zuhd* that can essentially be translated as piety. This becomes evident when we analyze the *Kitāb al-Zuhd* of Ibn al-Mubārak in the following section.

Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Zuhd*

Ibn al-Mubārak's magnum opus is his *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, or *Kitāb al-Zuhd wa-l-raqāʿiq*. The word *raqāʿiq* comes from *riqqa*, meaning a softness or "brittleness" of the heart that is derived from its purification. An examination of the contents of the *Kitāb al-Zuhd* indicates that this is essentially the subject of the work, rather than it being a work on abstinence from the world.

Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-Aʿzamī was the first to publish the *Kitāb al-Zuhd* from manuscript form to a book in 1966 at the Majlis Iḥyā al-Maʿārif institute in India. His introduction and notes in Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Bukhārī's work on Ibn al-Mubārak provide valuable information on the background of the published edition of the *Kitāb al-Zuhd*. The text contains 1,627 *ḥadīths* transmitted by Ibn al-Mubārak's student, al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan al-Marwazī. Al-Bukhārī writes that 358 reports are quotes attributed to the Prophet, 186 are reported to be sayings of the Prophet with a missing link (*mursal* or *muʿḍal*), 498 *ḥadīths* are sayings of Companions (*ṣaḥāba*), 583 sayings are

29 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-ṣāfiya*, 4:123.

attributed to the followers of the Companions and their followers (*tābiʿīn* and *tābiʿ tābiʿīn*) and four quotes are cited without chains of narration.³⁰

Of all these reports in the *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, al-Bukhārī writes that 411 reports are actually not transmissions of Ibn al-Mubārak but *ḥadīths* (prophetic and non-prophetic sayings) transmitted by other scholars which either al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan or Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Ṣāʿid³¹ added to Ibn al-Mubārak's set of *ḥadīths* on *zuhd*. Al-Aʿẓamī also adds 436 *ḥadīths* not included in al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan in his transmission of Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, but included by another transmitter of the book, Nuʿaym b. Ḥammād. Of these 436 *ḥadīths*, 64 are attributed the Prophet through a direct chain, 46 are prophetic traditions with broken chains, 132 are sayings attributed to Companions, 189 are sayings attributed to Followers of the Companions or their followers, 5 sayings do not have a chain of transmission.³²

Analysis of the *Kitāb al-Zuhd*

The way compilations of *ḥadīths* begin often reflects a great deal about the perspective of the compiler. Al-Nawawī and al-Bukhārī open their compilations of prophetic *ḥadīths* with the famous *ḥadīth* stating that the reward for all actions are determined by their intentions. Commentators have often noted that this was a reminder to the authors about the importance of having an intention to sincerely seek the pleasure of God when engaging in their scholarship.

Rather than intentions, the *Kitāb al-Zuhd* begins with the following *ḥadīth* on the value of time: "The two blessings which many people take for granted are time and good health." The second *ḥadīth* is similar: "Take advantage of five before five: your youth before old your age, your good health before your illness, your [state] of wealth before your poverty, your free time before your [becoming] busy, and your life before your death."

Setting the tone for the rest of the text, Ibn al-Mubārak begins by reminding the reader of the limited amount of time which humans have to live and hence framing the rest of his compilation as a work that describes and calls to various forms of piety. As we see, this work seldom speaks of asceticism and its mention of frugality in the world is limited relative to the overwhelming bulk of the book that discusses various actions related to ethics, morality, spirituality, and piety.

30 al-Bukhārī, *ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak*, 60–61.

31 Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Ṣāʿid b. Kātib; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 2:305.

32 al-Bukhārī, *ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak*, 61.

In terms of its organization, the work is divided into topics. This differs from other works such as Ibn Ḥanbal's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* which is organized chronologically. Ibn al-Mubārak's text is a description of various forms of piety and an exhortation to the reader to follow the practices mentioned in them; it is not an attempt to chronologically demonstrate the continuity of this practice among people regarded as emblems of piety, as in Ibn Ḥanbal's work.³³ Ibn al-Mubārak's style and structure is much more similar to later books of *zuhd* and works on Islamic piety that developed over the following centuries. This issue will be examined in greater depth shortly.

After a string of *ḥadīths* discussing the importance of time and then the vices of procrastination, Ibn al-Mubārak moves on to cite traditions about death. He begins with *ḥadīths* attributed to the Prophet and then mentions those attributed to Companions, followed by sayings by members of the early Muslim community. In a *ḥadīth* related by 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ, the Prophet is quoted as saying "Be in this world as a foreigner or a traveler, and accustom yourself [to visiting] the people of the grave."³⁴ This tradition is important as a reflection of Ibn al-Mubārak's understanding of *zuhd fī l-dunyā*. Rather than not possessing material wealth, he advocates a detachment from wealth. Thus, even if an individual is affluent as Ibn al-Mubārak was, he should not be attached to his possessions. As we see throughout the *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, piety is defined by states of the heart or the psyche and for Ibn al-Mubārak and his circle, "asceticism" is no exception. The idea of accustoming oneself to visiting graves reinforces the state of mind in which one practices *zuhd fī l-dunyā* by not losing sight of death and the afterlife.

This *ḥadīth* is followed by a saying attributed to 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr, "If you wake do not expect [to see] the evening, if you see the evening do not expect to see the morning, and take advantage of your health before your illness, your life before your death, because you do not know, O 'Abdallāh, what you will be called tomorrow."³⁵ This quote summarizes the tone in which Ibn al-Mubārak opens his *Kitāb al-Zuhd*. An important aspect of Islamic piety is the play between fear and hope (*khawf wa-rajāʾ*). Ibn al-Mubārak uses this technique throughout the book: he invokes elements of God's punishment to bring about a sense of fear and he mentions elements of God's mercy and reward to evoke a sense of hope. Ibn al-Mubārak begins his work by using the

33 Ibn Ḥanbal organized his book by writing biographical entries in chronological order, beginning with Adam and working through the prophets to the early Muslim community. The way this work is framed appears to emphasize the continuity of the practice of *zuhd* up to Ibn Ḥanbal's time.

34 Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, 83.

35 Ibid.

concept of fear to urge the reader to take action. This *ḥadīth* reflects a mode of *khawf* that was prevalent among the early pious community. It is not an extreme mode of fear that paralyzes one from action, nor does this perspective permit laxity in one's affairs. The *ḥadīths* mentioned in the *Kitāb al-Zuhd* are intended to create in the reader a sense of anxiety about the limited amount of time one has to perform good works worthy of saving oneself in the next life.

The statement, "you do not know what your name is tomorrow" refers to whether one is dead or alive. In Islamic culture, when one dies *al-marḥūm* (the deceased) is added to one's name to denote that he is deceased. Hence, a sense of accountability for one's actions is evoked in the text by reminding the reader of the nearness of death and the limited time one has to live a good life. After reading these opening *ḥadīths*, the reader is naturally led to ask, what does it mean to be a pious Muslim? Ibn al-Mubārak defines it as *zuhd* and therefore titles his book *Kitāb al-Zuhd*. The rest of the book then outlines what types of actions combine to form the definition of *zuhd*.

Ibn al-Mubārak devotes an entire section to the subject of sincere intention behind seeking knowledge. His understanding of this is significant when one recalls the pivotal role Ibn al-Mubārak played as a scholar in the second/eighth-century network of scholars. Ibn al-Mubārak includes a quote attributed to the famous Companion, Abū Dharr: "No one goes out to collect and memorize *ḥadīth* with ulterior motives (such as fame as a scholar) except that God does not grant him heaven." The mention of this suggests the existence of opportunists who narrated *ḥadīths* with material incentives. The fact that there were material incentives indicates the esteem with which the field of *ḥadīth* and those who transmitted *ḥadīth* during the early period were regarded. In another version of this *ḥadīth* attributed to another Companion of the Prophet, "Whoever studies knowledge or *ḥadīth* in order to speak about them will not find the smell of paradise."³⁶

The dangers of insincerity in seeking religious learning are coupled with another source of anxiety, namely the obligation to teach what one has learned. Ibn al-Mubārak cites the Companion Abū l-Dardā' as having said, "The worst rank on the day of judgment is that of the scholar who did not benefit [others] through his knowledge."³⁷ In another quote he says, "My greatest fear is to stand in front of God during the time of judgment and have it be said to me: 'What did you do with what you learned (*fa-mādhā 'amilta fīmā 'alimta*)?'"³⁸

36 Ibid., 96.

37 Ibid., 94.

38 Ibid.

The play between the words *ʿilm* (knowledge) and *ʿamal* (actions), in which the middle letters are switched and the words come to mean different things is a common theme in works of piety that discuss knowledge. It was often used as a play on words and a way to condemn knowledge without practice. Another quote attributed to al-Shaʿbī,³⁹ who was a member of the early community, reads “The people of paradise will look at the people of hell and say: ‘What has caused you to enter the fire when we have entered paradise because of your upbringing (*taʿdībikum*) and teachings?’ They will say: ‘We used to command others to do good and not do so [ourselves].” This quote addresses the problem of hypocrisy among scholars and those who call people to pious conduct. Ibn al-Mubārak’s *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, unlike other Islamic works, is focused entirely on the inner realities of piety. This inner reality which has often been characterized as the spiritual heart (*qalb*) in the Islamic tradition is derived from a variety of Qurʾānic verses, prophetic traditions, and early sayings such as those seen in Ibn al-Mubārak’s *Kitāb al-Zuhd*. Part of the literary method to invoke readers to pious acts involves addressing the issue of contradictions between outward practice and one’s inner state or private practice, as this particular saying addresses. This is also reflective of a mindset among many of the scholars of the early Muslim community regarding the dangers of knowledge.

Interestingly, in the following saying attributed to Wahb b. Munabbih, this danger of possessing knowledge is specifically compared to the danger of possessing material wealth; he says, “There is transgression in knowledge, as there is transgression in wealth.”⁴⁰ Considering that *zuhd fī l-dunyā* is defined by Ibn al-Mubārak as an inner state of detachment from wealth, this type of comparison between wealth and knowledge is full of meaning that reflects the point of view of the early community. Just as attachment to material wealth can be a cause of delusion regarding the nearness of death, vanity, pride, and oppression of the weak, knowledge is similarly dangerous. A scholar can easily be deluded by his religious knowledge to justify his own wrong actions, can be overtaken by a sense of vanity or pride because of his learning, and can easily oppress the ignorant through the power of his knowledge. This can be done by using his status as a scholar for his own personal gain or using those who depend on his knowledge.

Ibn al-Mubārak’s compilation also depicts the early community’s hesitancy to give rulings or transmit prophetic traditions, perhaps out of fear of error, sense of responsibility, or concern that it would give one a sense of personal pride. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Laylā is quoted as saying, “I have met with one

39 ʿAmir b. Shurāḥīl, a sound transmitter and known as a specialist in *fiqh*.

40 Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, 101.

hundred and twenty Companions of the Prophet, and none of them transmitted a prophetic *ḥadīth* except that he wished for his brother to complete it, nor a ruling (*fatwa*) except that he wished for his brother to complete it.”⁴¹ This *ḥadīth* is notable for two aspects: the desire of the Followers to meet with the Companions, and their fear of making a mistake in transmitting the words of the Prophet and/or in making rulings. The latter certainly means that they saw transmitting *ḥadīth* and making rulings as weighty responsibilities.

Another attitude that is linked to what we have seen above is the desire to counter one's own intellectual pride by using the phrase, “I do not know.”⁴² In what would otherwise appear to be an abrupt narration in the *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, “Ibn ‘Umar was asked about a matter and he said, “I do not know.” The quote immediately following this elucidates further, “Ibn ‘Umar was asked about a matter and he replied, ‘I do not know.’ Then he followed this up saying, ‘Do you wish to make our backs a bridge for you to hell by saying give us a *fatwa*, O Ibn ‘Umar?’”⁴³ This anecdote clearly depicts Ibn ‘Umar’s fear of responsibility associated with giving a religious decree (*fatwa*). It is also noteworthy that the speaker quoted here is Ibn ‘Umar (the son of ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb), who was known for his expertise in prophetic practice. The following is an important reflection of the views of those of the early period on scholarship and its vices.

A man from the people of greater Syria (Shām) reported that Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb said: “One of the tribulations (*fitnas*) of the legal scholar (*‘ālim al-faqīh*) is that speaking be dearer to him than listening. If he finds one who can replace him, then listening is security and an increase in knowledge. The listener is the partner of the speaker. In speaking [there is] excess, embellishment, exaggeration, and insufficiency for everyone except the one whom God protects from error. And from them [speakers] there are those who view that some people, due to their status or their face, are more worthy of [the speaker’s] words than others. And they look down upon the poor and do not see them worthy of them [their words]. And from among them are those who keep their knowledge to themselves and see teaching their knowledge as a loss and it should not exist accept with them. And among them are those who take knowledge as though they were a powerful ruler and are angered if any of their words are responded to or any of their rights are not granted. And among them are those who

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., 99.

43 Ibid.

appoint themselves to give *fatwas* and it may be that he is approached with a matter he has no knowledge of but he is ashamed to say, "I do not know." Hence, he is cursed and written among the transgressors. And among them are those who narrate everything they hear, even the words of the Jews and the Christians in order to support what they are saying."⁴⁴

This lengthy quote is quite profound in that it reveals a great deal of information about the socio-historical context of the late first/seventh or early second/eighth Islamic century. The quote originated from an anonymous figure in the land of greater Syria. It was not regarded as an important *ḥadīth* per se, but is included in this collection because of its significant meaning. The allusion to greater Syria implies that it was contemporary with the period of Umayyad ascendancy, as Syria was an important center of piety and developing Islamic scholarship. The many types of mortal flaws possessed by various scholars would seem to indicate that by the second/eighth century with the prominence of *ḥadīth* transmission and the attempts to derive Islamic law, that there was also a corresponding number of falsely pious figures or those who sought knowledge with ulterior worldly motives. The use of the word *fitna* here is significant as it connotes a test to faith and Islamic practice. It seems that the problems among spiritually unfit scholars were an issue that was lamented by some circles of early Muslims, including those of Ibn al-Mubārak.

The "words of the Jews and the Christians" in the context of the second/eighth century appears to refer to the narration of *Isrā'iliyyāt*, which were regarded as unreliable and therefore unsound evidence in law. The desperation to use this type of evidence to support one's position seems to indicate a competitiveness among scholars of the time. As a reaction to this, Ibn al-Mubārak and those he is upholding as models of early Islamic piety critique the attitudes of some scholars around them. Such a criticism and detailed account of the ailments of the early Muslim period lends greater credence to the claim that the *Kitāb al-Zuhd* was compiled in the period of the second/eighth century.

Furthermore, an examination of the contents of Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* does not reveal it to be a work of hagiography that emulates the early period. Most ironically, one can in fact derive what was perceived to be many of the shortcomings and flaws of the early Muslim community through the close examination of the contents of the *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, much of which censure various behaviors prevalent in the early period and contrast this with what the author regarded as proper practice.

44 Ibid., 97–98.

In addition to the lengthy section in the *Kitāb al-Zuhd* which discusses aspects of knowledge and scholarship, we find other manifestations of the use of fear (*khawf*) to evoke a sense of piety. In Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, there is another section devoted to sadness and fear of divine punishment. Interestingly, an overwhelming majority of sayings in the section on sadness are quotes attributed to Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. This seems to be indicative of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's outlook more than anything else; there is little else in this section that specifically refers to sadness as a virtue. Commenting on the prophetic tradition, "The world is the prison of the believer and the paradise of the disbeliever," Ḥasan al-Baṣrī is quoted as saying:

By God, a believer does not feel anything but sadness in it [the world]. And how can they not feel sad when God the Exalted has spoken and He has created hellfire, and there is no guarantee that he is free of it? By God, one is afflicted [in the world] with illnesses, hardships, overwhelming matters, oppression without victory. One hopes for reward for them with God the Exalted and remains sad and fearful until they leave it [i.e., they die]. When they leave it [the world] they have entered into security and dignity.⁴⁵

Based on these words, it appears that Ḥasan al-Baṣrī had quite a bleak perspective of the life of the material world. His view that it is nothing but hardship and fear of punishment seems to be consistent with his other sayings in the *Kitāb al-Zuhd*. He is also quoted as saying, in response to the verse, "Then at this statement do you wonder? And you laugh and do not weep?"⁴⁶ "By God, the wisest of the people in this matter are those who weep. So make these hearts weep. And cry over these deeds. For if a man's eyes do not weep, his heart becomes hard."⁴⁷ Sufyān al-Thawrī is also quoted as having said, "Sadness is to the extent of one's foresight."⁴⁸ Abū Bakr is quoted as saying, "Whoever among you is able to weep should weep. Who is not, should feign weeping."⁴⁹ Hence, the *Kitāb al-Zuhd* emphasizes the importance of maintaining an attitude of sobriety, and not losing sight of the gravity of the day of judgment. While Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's sayings appear to have a unique tone that reflect his personality, he was not exceptional in this outlook on sadness and the virtue of weeping. Jesus is also quoted in this section as saying, "Goodness (*ṭubā*) to he

45 Ibid., 129.

46 Qur'ān, 53:59–60.

47 Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, 131.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid., 132.

who controls his tongue, opens his house (to guests), and cries over his sins.”⁵⁰ Hence, remorse and sadness over wrong actions is a state of mind associated with Ibn al-Mubārak’s conception of *zuhd* or piety. While this may be seen in many early and later works on Islamic piety, there is a danger of overemphasizing the role of this concept of sadness in Islamic piety; these quotes and sections must be contextualized and viewed as one aspect of a far greater dynamic that balances the concepts of *khawf* and *rajāʾ*. Following the section with sayings encouraging sadness and weeping over one’s wrong actions are the traditions on the Prophet’s smile and joy. To make mention only of the section on sadness, without noting how it is balanced with this section will lead to conclusions that portray the early Muslim community as depicted by Ibn al-Mubārak as more austere and somber in their outlook than was necessarily true, due to a selective usage of literary evidence.

ʿAbdallāh b. al-Ḥārith is reported as having said, “I have never seen anyone who smiled more than the Messenger of God.” There is also a description of the way in which the Prophet was known to laugh, “He never used to laugh except with a smile. And he never turned [to address someone] except that he turned with his full [body].”⁵¹ In another narration, ʿĀʾisha is reported to have said, “I never saw the Messenger of God laugh fully [such that] I saw the back of his mouth. He used to smile.”⁵² The traditions are part of a genre of *ḥadīths* that describe the physical features and actions of the Prophet. Considering this context, the boundaries of the way the Prophet smiled likely reflect his composure rather than the sadness discussed in the earlier chapter. Another interesting tradition in the *Kitāb al-Zuhd* is one in which al-Awzāʿī reports that Bilāl b. Saʿd says about the early Muslim community, “I met them and they would be working in the world and joke with one another. However, when the night came they became monks.” This description is quite significant in that it summarizes the understanding of Ibn al-Mubārak and the circle of early Muslims who followed him in his “devotional style” in which he advocates for involvement in the world without being worldly.⁵³ It is unclear if this tradition is describing the Companions or their followers, but the portrayal of these pious individuals as being busy in their worldly affairs and joking with one another is a stark contrast from the ascetic practices of austere self-denial that were prevalent in the early Islamic period among

50 Ibid., 130. This is a report narrated through Ṣālim b. Abī Jaʿd which appears to be one of the Isrāʾīliyyāt, perhaps transmitted through Christian converts to Islam.

51 Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, 140.

52 Ibid., 141.

53 See a discussion on the various devotional styles of early Muslim piety in Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 18–22.

Christian monks and some Muslims influenced by this paradigm of piety. The reference to being “a monk at night” is usually understood in classical texts as an expression that alludes to the length and rigor with which one maintains the night vigil (*tahajjud*) in prayer before dawn. Thus, in this too we see an attempt to demonstrate a sort of balance between living in the world without living *for* it.

This compilation of traditions in the *Kitāb al-Zuhd* also reflects Ibn al-Mubārak's emphasis on the inward reality of the individual rather than outer manifestations of states. In other words, just as *zuhd fī l-dunyā* is not a matter of material wealth but rather having an inner detachment from it, a state of sadness over wrong actions is similarly a state of the heart; the believer is expected to smile and appear outwardly contented. In a quote attributed to Jesus:

If one of you fasts, let him apply oil to his head and beard; and wipe his lips [with oil] so that people cannot see that he is fasting. If he gives with his right, then let his left [hand] hide it. If he prays, let him bring down the covering of his door. For God distributes praise as He distributes provisions.⁵⁴

This is reminiscent of the earlier quote mentioned in which Ibn al-Mubārak states that one who brings attention to his *zuhd* has left *zuhd*. The vanity that can arise from calling attention to one's good actions in turn nullifies them. Similarly in this quote attributed to Jesus, if one is fasting he should make an effort to not show to others. When he prays or gives in charity, he is similarly expected to hide this. Another early Muslim by the name of al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad is quoted as having said, “The superiority of praying supererogatory prayers privately is analogous to the superiority of praying obligatory prayers in congregation.”⁵⁵ Hence, since praying extra prayers is a voluntary act of piety not practiced by everyone, it is preferred that one keep this secret so as to avoid vanity.

To get a full picture of Ibn al-Mubārak's conception of *zuhd* as derived from the contents of his *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, it is important to examine the sections which specifically discuss matters related to attitudes toward the material world and property. In an interesting tradition related to Ibn Mas'ūd in which he speaks to a later generation of Muslims, “Today, you have participated in more combat (*jihād*), have longer prayers, and a greater number of prayers than the Companions of the Messenger of God, yet they were better than you.

54 Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, 142.

55 Ibid., 143.

He was asked, 'Why?' He said: They had more detachment (*zuhd*) from the world and a greater desire for the hereafter."

This theme of the decreasing piety of the generation following the Companions, is commonly seen throughout the *Kitāb al-Zuhd*. In another tradition 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr b. al-Āṣ says, "It is dearer to me to persevere in doing [good] work today than to [be complacent] about what I've done in the past. This is because when we became Muslim, we were immersed in the work of the hereafter. However today, we have become overwhelmed with this world."⁵⁶ This is significant coming from a figure famous as being one of the "four 'Abdallāhs" and famed as one of the most knowledgeable of the Companions in prophetic traditions and religious matters. In terms of historiographical analysis, these types of traditions, which criticize rather than idealize the actions of the early community, bolster the claims that these texts are authentic, and were written by the scholars they are attributed to, and are not later hagiographic projections.

In another tradition one of the Companions tells their followers, "You all do today actions which you regard as finer than a hair but for us when we [lived] in the period of the Messenger of God [these] were among the deadly sins." The narrator of this tradition who is among the Followers of the Followers (*tābi' tābi'in*) then says, "I said to Abū Qatāda, "Then what if he saw our times [today]?" He [the one asked] replied, 'He would then have many words for this.'"⁵⁷

The content of the *Kitāb al-Zuhd* reveals that it was not a hagiography, written to praise and glorify earlier generations. Each of the sayings in the book comes together to reflect a variety of tones and historical realities that can be derived from piecing them together. It is indeed significant that the second and third generations of Muslims regard themselves as living in a period of corruption. It is also noteworthy that an important Companion such as 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr b. al-Āṣ, who was one of the scribes of the Prophet, described himself as having become distracted by the world and used to feel he was more attached to his faith when he first became a Muslim.

In these traditions, we also see the recurrence of the theme of *zuhd fī l-dunyā* as an inner state of the heart rather than a state of outwardly not possessing property. Piety is also not solely a factor of how many or how long one engages in extra ritual practice as the earlier tradition mentioned seems to indicate. The reporter of this tradition states that the generation that followed the Companions of the Prophet may have prayed more and engaged in more battles, but they still could not attain the ranks of the Companions

⁵⁶ Ibid., 159.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 156.

because the latter were more detached from the world and had a greater desire for the hereafter. We also see the way in which tropes of dual opposites are used in works of piety such as this to describe inner states. This can be seen with the use of *khawf* and *rajāʾ*, the material world and the hereafter, and the love of the world (*ḥubb al-dunyā*) and detachment from it.

Ibn al-Mubārak also includes a famous *ḥadīth* which appears in the collection of *Ṣaḥīḥ* Muslim, “... I do not fear poverty for you but rather I fear that the world will be presented to you the way it was presented to those before you and that you will compete [therein] as they competed for it, and that you [will] be destroyed as they were destroyed.”⁵⁸ This is consistent with the outlook of many of the other traditions that discuss property. This tradition neither rejects the validity of having wealth nor even discourages it, rather it warns against competing to accumulate property, as this distracts people from concerns related to the hereafter. In a similar prophetic tradition, “... I do not fear that you will associate partners with me but rather I fear for you because of the world and that you will compete for it.”⁵⁹

There are also a number of passages in the *Kitāb al-Zuhd* that refer to the value of the material world. In one tradition the Prophet is quoted as saying, “If the world had the worth of a wing of a fly in goodness, God would not have given any of it to a disbeliever.”⁶⁰ Another saying by Ḥasan al-Baṣrī states that he met people who were so careful in their association with wealth that when it was presented to them lawfully they refused it out of precaution.⁶¹

We see many examples of this type of precaution with acquiring property attributed to the Companions of the Prophet. In one anecdote, ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb sent four hundred dirhams from the treasury to ‘Ubayda b. al-Jarrāḥ and asked the boy with whom he sent the money to delay returning in order to observe what ‘Ubayda would do with the money. Soon after the boy visited him, saying that the leader of the believers has sent this to you to fulfill your needs, ‘Ubayda called his servant and said “Give these seven to so and so, and these five to so and so ...” until all of the money was spent. After which, the boy returned and reported to ‘Umar what transpired. ‘Umar then asked the same boy to go to Mu‘adh b. Jabal and do the same thing. Upon receiving the money, Mu‘adh b. Jabal also distributed it to the needy around him until his wife complained, saying, “O Mu‘adh! By God, we are also poor!” Upon hearing this he gave what was left to her—this was only two dirhams. The story then

58 Ibid., 286.

59 Ibid., 288.

60 Ibid., 292.

61 Ibid., 293.

mentions that when this was reported to the caliph ‘Umar, he said, “They are brothers, one from another.”⁶²

While it is not possible to ascertain the veracity of this story, the anecdote itself is a reflection of ideals about how people of piety interacted with wealth. In this case, the two well-known Companions, ‘Ubayda b. al-Jarrāh and Mu‘adh b. Jabal, gave away what they received out of fear of accumulating wealth. This attitude of apprehension of the snares of the accumulation of wealth corresponds to the earlier traditions mentioned in which the Prophet is quoted as expressing fear that Muslims will become engrossed in their attachment to the material world and will become forgetful of God and the hereafter. Similarly, in the tradition attributed to Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, they refused to keep what was given to them. This reminds us of the many references to Ibn al-Mubārak, in which he is portrayed as generously spending his wealth on scholars, pilgrims, and guests. ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb is also portrayed as being visited by another Companion whereupon he asked:

“In what state do you find me?”

He replied, “I see you, by God, in [a state] I and they would like to see you upon goodness. I see that you are strong in acquiring wealth, abstain from taking from it, and [are] just in dividing it. If you stray we would straighten you the way we straighten an arrow in a bow.”

‘Umar replied, “Thanks be to God who has placed me among a people that will straighten me out if I stray.”⁶³

‘Umar’s concern to avoid the snares of wealth and riches is portrayed in his interaction with the Companions whom he assigned to serve as governors. A report in Ibn al-Mubārak’s *Kitāb al-Zuhd* mentions that ‘Umar heard that one of his governors in Iraq was living in a palace with a gate that distanced him from the people. Upon hearing this ‘Umar sent Muḥammad b. Maslama to Kufa to burn down the governor’s gate. Sa’d, who was governor of Kufa, traveled to Medina to speak with ‘Umar regarding this matter. Upon hearing the news that reached ‘Umar, Sa’d denied what had been reported to ‘Umar. ‘Umar is reported to have replied:

The land of Iraq is a refined land while the people of Medina die of hunger. So I feared that I would assign you [to your post] and you would live in coolness while we are in the heat. I heard the Messenger of God say,

62 Ibid., 294.

63 Ibid., 294.

"The believer [or the man] does not satisfy himself without [taking care of] his neighbor."⁶⁴

This report is analogous to the *ḥadīth* which states that a believer should not sleep while his neighbor is hungry. In this narrative 'Umar's response to hearing of the luxuries in which his appointed governor and Companion of the Prophet was living is noteworthy and consistent with 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb's well-known strong character. His sending someone to burn down the gate of his governor's palace demonstrates his intense fear of becoming engrossed in a life of riches, as alluded to in similar traditions. His statement about the stark contrast between the environment in Medina and that of Kufa is also a reflection of the socio-historical reality of these two cities at this time. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf, another well-known and wealthy Companion, was mentioned by al-Zuhri in the following way.

'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf gave four thousand from his wealth in charity during the lifetime of the Prophet. Then he gave in charity forty thousand, then he gave in charity forty thousand, then he gave in charity forty thousand. Then he gave five hundred horses for the sake of God. Then he gave away one thousand five hundred beasts of burden for the sake of God. And the majority of his wealth came from business.⁶⁵

The mention of this is coupled with another tradition attributed to 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf, in which he says: "Muṣ'ab b. 'Umayr was killed and he was better than me. His funeral shroud [was so small that when it] covered his head, his feet became exposed. When his feet were covered his head became exposed and I would see him." He [also] said, "Ḥamza was killed and he was better than me. Then the world was presented to us and I fear that our reward has been given in advance." Then he started to cry and ceased eating.⁶⁶

The inclusion of these two quotes in the section that deals with *zuhd fī l-dunyā* is meaningful. Like Ibn al-Mubārak, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf was a wealthy merchant who, also like Ibn al-Mubārak, spent large sums of his wealth on charity. Thus, the theme of *zuhd fī l-dunyā* being an inner state of detachment from the world rather than an abstention from it as seen among many circles of ascetics during Late Antiquity is once again reiterated in the portrayal of this wealthy Companion. Even if the amount he is said to give away was exaggerated, the crux of the narration indicates that he was a *zāhid*

64 Ibid., 294–295.

65 Ibid., 296–297.

66 Ibid., 297.

not because he did not own anything, but because what he owned did not mean anything to him. This is symbolized in his ability to give away vast portions of his wealth in charity.

These narrations also indicate the way in which many members of the early Muslim community saw their wealth increase and multiply after the early expansions. Someone who was already a wealthy merchant giving away four thousand dirhams during the lifetime of the Prophet was giving away forty thousand after the expansions. Muṣ'ab b. 'Umayr was a Companion who was known for his wealth and stature before Islam but gave it all up once he converted and was disowned by his parents. Ḥamza was a wealthy uncle of the Prophet who spent the entirety of his wealth to support the Prophet; he died in battle before the Prophet's death. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf's comparison to these two figures reveals an attitude of apprehension and understanding of accountability that comes along with having immense wealth. His fear that he had received his reward in advance of the hereafter refers to his being rewarded for his sacrifices during the lifetime of the Prophet rather than after he died, as Ḥamza and Muṣ'ab would be, since they died before seeing the prosperity which the early expansions brought to people like himself.

The text of the *Kitāb al-Zuhd* contains a variety of topics related to moral conduct and piety. A familiarity with these is important to our study because it enables us to see connections with other works related to piety that appear later, such as other *kutub al-zuhd* and early works such as al-Qushayrī's epistle, which is regarded as a foundational work on Islamic spirituality and piety, or *taṣawwuf*.

Ibn al-Mubārak also designates sections that specifically address what are considered elements of Islamic piety, such as, humility (*tawāḍu'*), guarding the tongue (*ḥifẓ al-lisān*), reliance on God (*tawakkul*), vanity (*riyā' wa-l-'ujb*), contentment (*qanā'a*), greed (*shuḥ*), and acts recommended by the early community that do not fall under a specific category of Islamic piety, such as giving in charity, walking to the mosque, keeping good company, and seeking lawful provisions.

In looking at these sections, we see both similarities with and differences from later works such as those previously mentioned. General categories and concepts overlap, while the format—listing what early members of the community said about a matter without further discussion—appears to be an undeveloped form of literature on piety. In works composed centuries later, such as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, authors spend a substantial portion of their texts commenting on quotes such as those cited by Ibn al-Mubārak in the *Kitāb al-Zuhd*. In addition, the categories of pious practices mentioned above are relatively limited in variety, in comparison to the elements of pious conduct presented in the later works, like al-Qushayrī's

Risāla. This observation is useful in our attempt to determine whether the *Kitāb al-Zuhd* was originally a work of Ibn al-Mubārak or whether it was a later composition projected back to Ibn al-Mubārak's time. The stylistic elements mentioned above support the claim that this was an early work. If we consider the evolution of the genre of pious literature, the format of this book is related, yet lacks the sophistication of later texts on piety which would become known as *taṣawwuf*. This implies a more "primitive" form of a book of piety.

The Genre of Books on *Zuhd* (*Kutub al-Zuhd*)

It is unclear whether there were works which focused solely on *zuhd* prior to Ibn al-Mubārak's compilation.⁶⁷ Fuat Sezgin writes that according to al-Ṭūsī in his *Fihrist*, there was an earlier *Kitāb al-Zuhd* written by Thābit b. Dīnār (d. 150/767); this cannot be confirmed because the book is not extant. Thus, the *Kitāb al-Zuhd* of Ibn al-Mubārak is the earliest extant book we have on this topic. In analyzing the role of Ibn al-Mubārak and his contribution to the burgeoning Islamic scholarly tradition, it is essential to examine the genre of *kutub al-zuhd* and trace its major works. I have listed the following extant books in estimated chronological order.

1. *Kitāb al-Zuhd* by ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak: This is the earliest extant book of the genre of *kutub al-zuhd* which arose starting in the second/eighth century. It concerns aspects of Islamic piety rather than asceticism and includes prophetic traditions as well as non-prophetic traditions related to the practice of the early Muslim community. It reflects a perspective on piety and the possession of wealth that is distinct from the austere ascetic practices prevalent in other religious communities in greater Syria during the second/eighth century.

2. *Kitāb al-Zuhd* by Wakiʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ: Wakiʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ b. Malīḥ al-Ruʿāsī is primarily known as an important early *ḥadīth* transmitter. Born in Kufa in 129/746, his father was the head of the Kufan treasury (*bayt al-māl*). His father gave special attention to ensuring that his son was educated in the Islamic sciences and thus Wakiʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ had the opportunity to study *ḥadīth* from the prominent Islamic scholars of his time. Among Wakiʿ's teachers were Hishām b. ʿUrwa, Ibn Jurayj, al-Awzāʿī, Sufyān al-Thawrī, and Mālik. Wakiʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ became one of the foremost scholars of *ḥadīth* and was a central figure in the early network of *ḥadīth* scholars who shaped Islamic beliefs and

67 Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:636. Cf. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *al-Fihrist* (Najaf: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Ḥaydariyya, 1960), 41–42.

practice. A great many figures transmitted *ḥadīths* through him: among his students were ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī and Sufyān al-Thawrī.

Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ was also known for being among the most reliable sources of Sufyān al-Thawrī’s *ḥadīth*. This is also significant given that Sufyān al-Thawrī was one of the most influential teachers of Ibn al-Mubārak. Ibn al-Mubārak was older than Wakīʿ (by eleven years) but still young enough that they were contemporaries.

Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ’s *Kitāb al-Zuhd*⁶⁸ has many similarities and noteworthy divergences from Ibn al-Mubārak’s work. While in Wakīʿ’s work the term *zuhd* is not only used to mean asceticism but also morality and pious conduct, there is a far greater emphasis on abstention from the world and the remembrance of death. Though sections of Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ’s work also pertain to matters related to the early conception of Islamic piety, Wakīʿ had a far more austere understanding of the definition of this type of piety. This notable difference illustrates a different type of attitude toward worldliness, and is significant to discussions of authenticity. Though ascribed to a relatively similar time period and topic, the distinct “flavor” of this text is consistent with the nature of texts originating from other authors. Had they been later projections on this early period, we would expect to find evidence of this claim in similar styles, which would imply a similar origin, source or milieu. This will be discussed further in the conclusion to this study.

Unlike Ibn al-Mubārak’s work, Wakīʿ’s *Kitāb al-Zuhd* notably begins by speaking about death. This sets both the tone and framework for the rest of the work. As discussed in our analysis of Ibn al-Mubārak’s *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, the *ḥadīths* various compilers, including Ibn al-Mubārak, chose to begin their *ḥadīth* books with were deliberate and reveal the author’s perspective on Islamic piety. From the onset we find Wakīʿ had a far more morose perspective on the material world. One of the first prophetic traditions he cites is, “O slave of God, be in this world as though you were a traveler or a passerby. And count yourself from among the dead.”⁶⁹ He follows his discussion on death by a section on laughter and crying. In his section on laughter he cites the famous prophetic tradition, “If you knew what I know you would laugh little and cry much.”⁷⁰ The remainder of the text includes sayings that diminish the value of the world and advocate a form of abstinence from it. It is important however, that this is not the subject of the entirety of Wakīʿ’s book on *zuhd*. Much of the rest of Wakīʿ’s work is similar to Ibn al-Mubārak’s in that aspects

68 Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ, *al-Zuhd li-Wakīʿ*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Fariwā’i (Medina: Maktabat al-Dār, 1984).

69 Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ, *al-Zuhd li-Wakīʿ*, 230.

70 Ibid., 242.

of morality and piety (such as humility, kindness, etc.) are also included. This implies that the word *zuhd* was used differently in various contexts, as seen from Ibn al-Mubārak's understanding of *zuhd*. At times it is used in its literal sense to mean abstinence from the world. At other times Waki' uses it to mean the general category of pious conduct. The variation of the usage of this word could also mean that the term itself was evolving in the late second/eighth century, and hence its usage fluctuated from its literal meaning to a broader one.

Finally, Waki's book mentions wearing wool (*ṣūf*), either because the concept was being discussed toward the end of the second/eighth century, or because that reference was a later addition to this work. In either case, it demonstrates a significant link between *zuhd* and later Sufism, which regarded the books of *zuhd* as predecessors to the genre of books on Sufism. If we argue that this reference was a later addition, we must question why later figures would have chosen to add this to Waki's book on *zuhd* rather than a general book of *ḥadīths* or law if they themselves did not believe there to be a connection between early *zuhd* and later Sufi literature.

3. *Kitāb al-Zuhd li-Mu'āfa b. Imrān al-Mūsili*: Abū Mas'ūd Mu'āfa b. Imrān b. Nufayl b. Jābir (d. 185/801 or 204/819)⁷¹ was from Mosul in Iraq. He was another close student of Sufyān al-Thawrī and among the core transmitters of his *ḥadīth*. Mu'āfa was distinguished in biographical sources as an ascetic who learned *adab*, a term often equated with pious conduct, from Sufyān al-Thawrī.⁷² Ibn Ḥajar writes that he was a worshipful person, austere in his practice of asceticism (*ʿubbād al-mutaqashshifin fī l-zuhd*). Here *zuhd* is modified and used to mean abstention from the world rather than general piety. It is noted that Mu'āfa was a close companion of Waki' b. al-Jarrāḥ; Mu'āfa's [spiritual] "sons," such as Bishr al-Ḥāfi, are also described as ascetic figures. While he was a *ḥadīth* transmitter who transmitted *ḥadīth* from many of the earlier figures Ibn al-Mubārak was associated with, such as al-Awzāʿī, Mālik, Sufyān al-Thawrī, and Ḥammād b. Salama, the biographical material on him reveals that his outlook on piety had a much more ascetic orientation.

The description of him in the biographical entries are confirmed by the choice of the *ḥadīths* he included in his *Kitāb al-Zuhd*. Unlike Waki's book, which begins with a chapter on death, Mu'āfa begins his compilation on *zuhd* with a chapter on the merits of frugality in wealth and children. While the inclusion of children in a book such as this may seem odd, it appears to be a reference to Qur'an 18:46: "Wealth and progeny are from the ornaments of the life of the world." The warning against having too many children is a per-

71 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 10:199–200.

72 Ibid., 10:200.

spective that is not found in Wakī's or Ibn al-Mubārak's compilations and is a reflection of a more austere attitude toward the world.

The following section concerns the dangers of having too many servants. He cites a number of quotes from early figures who discourage excess in material things; a quote attributed to a figure by the name of Mujāhid says, "Do not increase the number of servants for you increase the number of devils."⁷³

The remainder of this short compilation on *zuhd* is similar in tone and topic and includes various topics related to asceticism: the avoidance of excess in food and dress and being content with a limited amount of property. It differs from other books of *zuhd* in two significant ways. First with the exception of a section encouraging and illustrating the merits of humility, Mu'afa does not include a variety of sections on elements of piety under the general category of *zuhd*. Second, his work is primarily based on sayings and anecdotes from early Muslim figures rather than prophetic traditions, though there are still a number of overlapping traditions attributed to the Prophet.

4. Asad b. Mūsā's *Kitāb al-Zuhd*: Asad b. Mūsā b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Umawī (d. 212/827)⁷⁴ was born in 132/749 in either Basra or Egypt and died in Egypt. He appears to have been viewed less favorably than the earlier figures mentioned. In his *Tahdhīb* Ibn Ḥajar notes that scholars of *ḥadīth* criticism had mixed views on his status as a transmitter. It appears that he transmitted *ḥadīths* that were contested in terms of their accuracy. Ibn Ḥazm says "his *ḥadīth* are criticized (*munkir*) and weak." Al-Nasā'ī states that he was a reliable transmitter but it would have been better if he did not record *ḥadīth*. Ibn Yūnus' opinion of Asad b. Mūsā appears to shed light on the controversy surrounding his rank as a transmitter. He says, "he related criticized *ḥadīths* but I believe the flaw was not his," meaning that he narrated *ḥadīths* with problematic chains of transmission (*isnāds*) but he himself was not an unreliable transmitter.

Asad b. Mūsā compiled a book on *zuhd* with a unique approach to the subject matter. His *Kitāb al-Zuhd* is composed of one hundred four mainly non-prophetic or broken (*marfū'*) prophetic traditions.⁷⁵ The contents of

73 Mu'afa b. 'Imrān, *Kitāb al-Zuhd: wa-yalīh musnad al-Ma'āfi b. 'Imrān al-Mawṣilī* (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyya, 1999), 198.

74 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 1:260.

75 Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, 36. The editor of Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* includes a useful survey of some of the early books of *zuhd* in his introduction. He mentions that the quality of *ḥadīths* in Asad b. Mūsā's work were not regarded as strong. However, non-prophetic and weak traditions were used by the majority of scholars in encouraging "good works" on the condition that, first, they did not contradict Islamic principles, second, their weakness was not to a degree that they were suspected of having been fabricated,

this work are almost entirely related to God's punishment and the day of judgment. Of all the *kutub al-zuhd* encountered thus far, Asad b. Mūsā's work is by far the most morose. He includes sections on the punishments and severity of the suffering of the people of hell, and on the drinks in hell. He also has sections dedicated to God's reckoning on the day of judgment, the scales therein, and the taking of justice (*qisās*) between individuals on this day. There is no discussion of abstinence from the world or the avoidance of materialism in his compilation. It would appear that Asad b. Mūsā defined *zuhd* as piety, though with an understanding of piety that differs markedly from that of earlier figures. Asad b. Mūsā's approach to piety appears to be rooted in the concept of *khawf* and *rajā'*, or instilling a sense of fear and hope, with the intention of attaining a pious awareness of God. However, this work mainly stirs a sense of fear and awe of divine retribution in order to discourage wrongdoing.

5. *Kitāb al-Zuhd li-Hannād b. al-Sarrī*:⁷⁶ Hannād b. Sarri b. Muṣ'ab (152–243/769–857)⁷⁷ was a Kufan who transmitted *ḥadīths* from 'Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak, Fuḍayl b. 'Iyād, Wakī' b. al-Jarrāh, and others. He was also a link to prominent scholars after him; among those who reportedly learned *ḥadīth* from him are al-Bukhārī, Abū Ḥātim, and Abū Zur'a. He was ranked as a sound transmitter of *ḥadīths* and apparently viewed more favorably than Asad b. Mūsā. Hannād b. Sarri's work is notable in comparison to that of Asad b. Mūsā by the stark contrast in the topics they chose to include in their books on *zuhd*. While Asad's work focused primarily on hell and the perils of the day of judgment, Hannād's work is at the opposite end of the spectrum; it focuses on paradise and the rewards in the hereafter that await those who conduct their affairs in this world with uprightness.

In his book, Hannād begins by including lengthy sections on the intricate details of paradise. He talks about the drinks, the rivers, the women, the fruit, and the levels of the people of heaven. The length of his section on paradise is comparable to the length of Asad b. Mūsā's entire book. After his extensive discussion of heaven, he includes only a few chapters on hell, life in the grave, and the people of the heights (*a'rāf*)—those who are stranded between hell and heaven.

The remainder of Hannād's book (the bulk of it) includes chapters related to piety. It follows a format similar to that of Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Zuhd*.

and third, that those who practice the tradition are aware of the weakness in it and intend something good without believing it to be obligatory.

76 Hannād b. Sarri l-Kufi [Ibn Sarri], *al-Zuhd*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Fariwā'i (Kuwait: Dār al-Khulafā' lil-Kitāb al-Islāmī, 1985).

77 Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 11:70–71.

Hannād's compilation includes a chapter on aspects of Islamic piety such as humility (*tawāḍuʿ*), scrupulousness (*waraʿ*), arrogance (*kibr*), silence, vanity (*riyāʿ*), and envy (*ḥasad*). The divisions of elements of Islamic piety overlap with the categories of piety that are more directly associated with Sufi literature as in the *Risālat al-Qushayrīyya* or the *Iḥyāʾ ulūm al-dīn*.

Hannād's book on *zuhd* has one hundred sixteen chapters organized according to topics like those mentioned above.⁷⁸ The book is a compilation of sayings attributed to the Prophet and the Companions and reports of their actions, and the sayings and actions of the early community of the Followers of the Companions (*tābiʿīn*). In total, it includes one thousand four hundred sixty-seven sayings and anecdotes related to the Prophet, Companions, and their Followers.⁷⁹ In genre and style it combines aspects of earlier books of *zuhd* and the works of early Sufi literature.

6. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's *Kitāb al-Zuhd*: Abū ʿAbdallāh Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥanbal al-Shaybānī (d. 241/855) was born in Baghdad in 164/780. He was well-known for his resistance during the *miḥna* on the debate over the creation of the Qurʾān, and his extensive contribution to the field of *ḥadīth*. He was a student of al-Shāfiʿī, the renowned jurist, and later established a school of Islamic law himself. Al-Shāfiʿī is quoted as having said of him, "I left Baghdad and I did not leave behind anyone who had more understanding of religious matters (*fiqh*), abstention from the world (*zuhd*), caution about [the lawful and forbidden], or knowledgeable than Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal."

Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* is unique in its presentation and differs from the style of previous works on *zuhd*. The first person narration of the book indicates that it was probably transmitted in its entirety by Ibn Ḥanbal's son ʿAbdallāh. It is organized chronologically and appears to model the *ṭabaqāt* works that were prevalent in his time. Ibn Ḥanbal's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* is organized as a narrative of how earlier prophets and communities practiced piety and detachment from the world from the time of Adam, through the various Biblical prophets to the time of the Prophet Muḥammad. The book includes the generations of the Companions who are also presented as having upheld practices of *zuhd*. Ibn Ḥanbal's *Zuhd* begins with a chapter that depicts various anecdotes and reports on the Prophet Muḥammad, then returns to Adam and proceeds chronologically from Adam onwards. The last section is devoted to various Companions of the Prophet.

A majority of the narratives included in the book are not prophetic reports that are found in books of *ḥadīth*. This has significant implications in examining the genre of the books of *zuhd* in general and questions regarding the

78 Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, 36.

79 Ibid.

influences of Late Antique practices of asceticism upon the later practitioners of *zuhd*. The tone and format of Ibn Ḥanbal's presentation of *zuhd* is markedly distinct in style and content and differs from the structure and style of prophetic traditions in *ḥadīth* books. The usage of *isnāds* only with prophetic *ḥadīths* bolsters the arguments in chapter 2 that the *isnād* system in *ḥadīth* texts generally represent a genuine transmission. Otherwise, if *isnāds* were arbitrarily used to bolster fabricated *ḥadīths*, then in the case of Ibn Ḥanbal's text the question which arises is why these *isnāds* were not also assigned to non-prophetic reports in order to bolster the veracity of Ibn Ḥanbal's work.

Ibn Ḥanbal's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* includes a number of sayings in which Wahb b. Munabbih relays the words of Jesus. A close study of how the methodology of reporting the sayings of Jesus by this important early *ḥadīth* transmitter differs from the way he reports prophetic *ḥadīths* elsewhere is a good topic to study in depth elsewhere. These reports appear to be based on *Isrā'īliyyāt* (narratives from Christian and Jewish sources). This brings about an important question, namely, to what extent were early books of *zuhd* or Islamic piety influenced by the extant traditions of Christian monasticism in the Late Antique period?

Ibn Ḥanbal's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* serves as an example of a work which was clearly permeated in many parts by the *Isrā'īliyyāt*. The stark differences between Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* and that of Ibn Ḥanbal would appear to imply that Ibn al-Mubārak sought to resist many manifestations of second/eighth-century piety or traditions of Christian monasticism.

What accounts for Ibn al-Mubārak's limited use of *Isrā'īliyyāt* and Ibn Ḥanbal's willingness to include them? The distinct styles of the books of *zuhd* indicate that there were competing ideals of Islamic piety and that it was an internal development based on how Muslims interpreted their traditions. This further challenges arguments that Islamic spirituality and ideals of piety were imported into Islam from the influences of outside traditions.

7. Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn b. Alī l-Bayhaqī (d. 384/994): Al-Bayhaqī is another important early Muslim scholar who, among a large number of other works, also composed a *Kitāb al-Zuhd*. Born in Nisābūr in 384/994, he became known for his extensive travels which gave him the opportunity to interact with a wide array of scholars of his time, including the *imām al-ḥaramayn*, al-Juwaynī's father Abū Muḥammad 'Abdallāh b. Yūsuf al-Juwaynī and Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī. He was highly regarded in the field of *ḥadīth* and Shāfi'ī *fiqh*.

This book of *zuhd* is significant in the way it unambiguously establishes the link between Sufism and *zuhd*. Al-Bayhaqī defines *zuhd* as various aspects of Islamic piety rather than asceticism, and explicitly uses the term *taṣawwuf*

and explains that the word comes from the word for purity (*ṣafa*), which indicates the state of the heart of the Sufi. The remainder of al-Bayhaqī's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* is composed of chapters related to various aspects of piety and spirituality, each of which are elaborated upon through quotes attributed to early pious figures.

In analyzing these books we find three important traits that are of significant historical consequence. First, the contents of these books of *zuhd* demonstrate that in general the term *zuhd* does not refer solely to asceticism, as is sometimes portrayed. Rather, it is more often used to denote Islamic piety in general, the practice of abstaining from all that distances one from God. Thus, the contents of the *kutub al-zuhd* reflect conceptions of Islamic piety. A closer examination of the early Muslim community's definitions of Islamic piety and the sources from which they drew these conceptions challenges the assumption that the early so-called ascetics and the emergence of Sufism was primarily a result of influences from outside the Islamic tradition, such as the ascetic practices of Christians in greater Syria. Rather, we find that by examining early Muslim conceptions of piety, spirituality defined in the form of the many Qur'anic references to the spiritual heart, and virtue ethics derived from what was understood to be the prophetic model, we can establish how Islam was understood by the early Muslim community. A close analysis of the early texts on Islamic piety indicates that a far more complex amalgam of competing trends of piety developed within the Islamic tradition, initially in the form of *zuhd*, which laid the foundation for the later development of a more systematized field of *taṣawwuf*. From Sufism diverse paths or orders (*ṭarīqas*) emerged; these envisioned different methods and practices for the realization of the goals of inner piety and virtue ethics established in the more general field of Sufism. We also find the emergence of mysticism that also evolved from the basic foundational field of Sufism that focused on piety and spiritual connection to God. We also find that the more systematized presentations of Sufism developed from within the Islamic tradition itself while specific practices related to Sufi orders (*ṭarīqas*) and philosophies related to mysticism indeed engaged Islamic spirituality with ideas and practices from other traditions.

Arguably, the common tendency to conflate *ṭarīqas* (spiritual paths/orders) and *taṣawwuf* (Sufism) has resulted in problematic conclusions in both Muslim and western studies of Islam. Much of the criticisms, observations, and analogies made about Sufism and outside spiritual traditions and many of the objections some Muslims have of so-called "Sufi practices" are quite often in fact criticisms of the particularities of *ṭarīqas* rather than a criticism of Sufism itself. If we define Sufism as Islamic spirituality and virtue ethics we can also understand *ṭarīqas* as the ways in which societies attempted to put the ideals of Sufism into practice. This practice often took

on the cultural influences of other traditions that individual *ṭarīqas* were in contact with. The distinction between *ṭarīqas* and *taṣawwuf* is key to understanding Sufism as a discipline of Islamic piety, with its roots in these early books of *zuhd*.

Similarly, another important distinction can be made between Sufism and what is often termed “mysticism.” If we consider the vastness of Sufism as a tradition in terms of its content, scholarship, and pious figures, we find that there are elements that pertain to daily practices which are both relevant and considered by Muslim scholars to be required (*farḍ ‘ayn*) of every Muslim man and woman. These aspects of moral practice and virtue ethics are commonly agreed upon and not disputed in scholarly circles, while other works and writings that are more theoretically grounded in the field of metaphysics at times have been contested by various Muslim intellectuals from within the tradition. This approach within the framework of the wider field of Sufism may be distinguished by the term “mysticism,” for the purposes of this discussion, as opposed to the aspects of Sufism more grounded in scriptural evidence. Some critics of Sufism, both within and outside the Islamic tradition, have focused solely on the problematic aspects of mysticism and/or *ṭarīqas* to make a case that Sufism as a whole originated outside what may be considered the normative teachings of the Islamic tradition.⁸⁰ The result has been that the understanding of Islamic piety in the form of Sufism as an integral part of Sunnī Islamic practice has been understudied and even ignored at times.

Carl Ernst writes:

The history of the study of Sufism shows how powerfully the Orientalist discourse on religion reformulated aspects of Islamic culture into a separate category called Sufism. At the same time, growing “fundamentalist” movements in Muslim countries have isolated and rejected many aspects of what we call Sufism, as part of the struggle over ownership of Islamic religious symbolism. The fact that these debates have taken place in the colonial and post-colonial periods indicates that modernity is crucial to understanding Sufism. Yet the classicist bias of Orientalism, and the

80 Sherman Jackson makes a related argument saying, “In the end while opponents of Sufism press their case by equating *taṣawwuf* with mysticism—pantheistic, antinomian mysticism at that!—defenders of Sufism are equally guilty of conflating it with simple pietism, in order to mask the various mystical, theological, and practical shenanigans that some Sufis have been known to practice and endorse.” See Sherman Jackson, *Sufism for Non-Sufis? Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh al-Sakandari’s Tāj al-‘Arūs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 25.

strikingly similar “golden-age” historiography of fundamentalism, have conspired to keep Sufism separate from modernity.⁸¹

Furthermore, the fact that these writers (such as Ibn al-Mubārak, Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ, and al-Bayhaqī) of books on piety were major *ḥadīth* transmitters and essential figures in the network of Sunnī scholars indicates that their vision of piety was not an offshoot from a “mainstream” form of a more rigid so-called Islamic orthodoxy, but, rather these views of Islamic piety were the very products of the Sunnī Islam that these figures unquestionably represented.

Finally, the contents of the *kutub al-zuhd* appear to demonstrate a parallel between later works on piety such as al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* and al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*; this indicates that the genre of *kutub al-zuhd* played a foundational role in laying the groundwork for later literature in the science of *taṣawwuf* or Sufism which evolved and was systematized after the third/ninth century. While a more in depth comparison of early Sufi literature with the *kutub al-zuhd* is beyond the scope of this study, the findings in this section lay the foundations for important questions for further study.

81 Carl W. Ernst, “Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism: Problematizing the Teaching of Sufism,” in *Teaching Islam*, ed. Brannon Wheeler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 108–123.

Conclusion

In examining the scholarly contributions of ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak, whose life extended from the end of the Umayyad period to the early decades of ‘Abbasid rule, we find a unique window onto the evolution and vision of early Islam during the developing stages of its scholastic tradition. Ibn al-Mubārak was not only a scholar who was entrenched in the system of the early propagation and production of Islamic knowledge, but he was also a figure who was central to its development and helped shape its direction.

As a major *ḥadīth* transmitter who was a pioneer in his advocacy of writing *ḥadīths* rather than solely relying on memory for their preservation, Ibn al-Mubārak became a unique source of a large number of *ḥadīths* in the second/eighth century. In addition, his extensive travels gave him access to a vast array of the prominent scholars of his time. In analyzing Ibn al-Mubārak’s teachers and students, we find a sophisticated network of scholars who formed the backbone of the Sunnī scholastic tradition. This is significant in that it portrays the important role *ḥadīth* played in defining the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā‘a*, later known as Sunnīs, by the fourth/tenth century. The word “*ḥadīth*” in the early period was used loosely to designate not only sayings attributed specifically to the Prophet, but also material attributed to members of the early Muslim community, including Companions, their Followers, and the Followers of these Followers. By analyzing early texts, we find that before the rise of written materials in prose, Islamic knowledge was essentially transmitted in the form of “*ḥadīths*” or quotes from an array of early figures deemed as representative of “authentic” Islamic belief. As recent studies in *ḥadīth* illustrate, and as I discuss at length, the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā‘a* were the transmitters of this tradition and played a crucial role by choosing which scholars to include in their circles and which to exclude, and by determining which traditions were authoritative.

Recent works in *ḥadīth* studies and analyses of prosopographical works have made significant contributions to furthering our understanding of the role of *ḥadīth* in shaping the identity of the Sunnīs in the first three Islamic centuries. Rather than a passive group of individuals who were the “left-over” simple minded common folk (sometimes derogatorily called the *ḥashwiyya*) after other sects diverged from the larger Muslim community, a study of the figures in the various *ṭabaqāt* (generations of scholars) presents a nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the development of Sunnī thought, which was led by a proactive network of figures who validated each other and were a driving force that shaped normative Islamic practice.

The relations of these key scholars and what they understood as normative practice is represented in the life of Ibn al-Mubārak. For instance, his teacher Ma'mar b. Rāshid was a key link between the generation of *ḥadīth* transmitters preceding him and was known as one of the two most prominent students of al-Zuhrī. Ma'mar was also an important transmitter of the *ṣīyar* and *maghāzī* literature that was transmitted in large part in 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī's *Muṣannaf*.

Similarly, Ibn al-Mubārak's relationship with Sufyān al-Thawrī was another important link that influenced the transmission of *ḥadīths*; furthermore, Sufyān al-Thawrī's conception of piety likely affected Ibn al-Mubārak's understanding of it in the *Kitāb al-Zuhd*. Both Sufyān al-Thawrī and Ibn al-Mubārak were merchants who did not advocate a perspective that regarded the possession of wealth with disdain. Ibn al-Mubārak also had the unique opportunity to learn from a combination of scholars such as al-Awzā'ī, Mālik, and Abū Ḥanīfa. Each of these jurists also represented the development of law in each of the major scholarly hubs of Medina, Syria, and Iraq. In the anecdotes narrating Ibn al-Mubārak's experiences with these historical figures we find valuable bits of information, such as the skepticism with which the initial phases of Abū Ḥanīfa's approach to Islamic law was regarded or the interconnectedness of these scholars and their familiarity with each other's work.

In addition, Ibn al-Mubārak's students, such as Ibn Ma'in and 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī, served as a central link between the second/eighth and third/ninth-century scholars, and enabled Ibn al-Mubārak's influence to continue. Ibn Ma'in was a foundational figure in the field of *ḥadīth* criticism and his incorporation of Ibn al-Mubārak's work into his own ensured the lasting legacy of his teacher. Ibn Ma'in also linked Ibn al-Mubārak to the most prominent traditionists of the later period, including Muḥammad b. Ismā'il al-Bukhārī, Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, and Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī.

The piety of the figures of this scholarly network that Ibn al-Mubārak was an essential member of is significant on multiple levels. First, these scholars were known by the masses for their pious conduct, and this is what enabled them to gain access to membership of the Sunnī network of scholars. This network differed from a centralized clergy system in which positions are appointed internally. It was by gaining recognition from the masses that the web of Muslim scholars had the authority to endorse or reject individuals into their network. Second, the emphasis on the piety of the *ḥadīth* transmitters (as cited by biographical dictionaries, which commonly rejected or criticized traditionists based on their conduct) demonstrates that acceptance as a reliable *ḥadīth* transmitter did not lie solely in the sharpness of the intellect of the *ḥadīth* transmitter but also depended on additional factors such as moral conduct.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, this network of scholars in turn received their own authority from the support of the common folk who recognized them for their piety and from their colleagues who approved of the validity and accuracy of their transmissions and what they deemed an authentic understanding of prophetic teachings. In this way, the Sunnī scholastic tradition was both static and flexible. It was static in that it maintained a general framework of definitive prohibitions, prescriptions, beliefs, and practices that remained constant and were preserved through what became known as *isnāds* (chains of transmission) that were attested to by volumes of prosopographical works on *ṭabaqāt* (or generations) of each intellectual link in chains of transmitters. It was dynamic in that many if not the majority of matters related to daily practice could be deliberated and differed upon within this basic framework, which eventually came to be understood as normative Islamic practice, akin to a form of orthodoxy preserved in the form of a normative scholastic tradition.

In addition to Ibn al-Mubarak's scholarship and its reflection of the formative period of the Sunnī scholastic tradition, we also derive valuable insights into the nature of early Muslim society by examining his martial pursuits. As demonstrated by earlier research, by the second/eighth century when the *thughūr* emerged, pious figures began to spend a period of time there, both fighting and engaging in scholarly pursuits. This pious martial zeal took place on both the Muslim and the Christian side of the frontier. Records in classical sources also portray this perception of martial pursuits in the name of territorial expansion by both Muslims and Christians as a form of piety that was not unique to the second/eighth century, although it appears to have reached a level of sophistication during this timeframe.

By Ibn al-Mubārak's time the remote areas of the *thughūr* became centers of learning attracting a large number of scholars who taught and studied *ḥadīths* while guarding the idle frontlines. Classical sources refer to Fuḍayl b. 'Iyād, al-Awzā'ī, and al-Fazārī spending a period of time guarding the frontlines. The flow of scholars from the east into Syria was also important in that it allowed for the Islamic sciences that were developing in places like Baghdad to penetrate Syria and beyond. In addition, the eastern scholastic trends came to dominate over that of the Syrian scholars. Hence, it is likely that for this reason, the legal schools of scholars such as al-Awzā'ī eventually died out in Syria and were replaced by other modes of thinking from the east.

Like his *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Jihād* played a prominent role in the field of scholarship on the topic of *jihād*. Soon after his work, we find a series of *kutub al-jihād* written by various scholars. Notably, Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Jihād* is rich in historical information and reflects how *jihād* was used as a means to portray general elements of piety. Thus, the

work begins with quotes that emphasize the importance of sincere intentions for God rather than personal gain or ostentation. The anecdotes and sayings from the early community that he includes provide a valuable window on early community's perception of piety. Furthermore, the relatively chronological ordering of historical references in the book depicts a vision of the practice of *jihād*, as it was established during the Prophet's lifetime and the way that it continued until Ibn al-Mubārak's period.

Ibn al-Mubārak was also well-known for his position as a proponent of *zuhd*. In examining his famous work on the topic, we find that the way he and many others who followed him defined *zuhd* diverges from its lexical definition of asceticism. *Zuhd* is used as a general term that encompasses a variety of forms of Islamic piety. Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* is an invaluable resource in defining what the early Muslim community regarded as pious conduct.

A study of Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* also offers a nuanced perspective of how the early Muslim community viewed wealth and the origins of later Sufi texts that developed from the *kutub al-zuhd*. We find that rather than *zuhd* in the second/eighth century being an imitation of Christian monasticism, it was in fact an interpretation of piety that consisted of a diverse variety of forms. Ibn al-Mubārak was a "rich ascetic" whose interpretation of *zuhd* involved abstaining from worldliness, but not from the world itself. Similarly, Ibn al-Mubārak's teacher Sufyān al-Thawrī, who was another important figure of early piety, was also a wealthy merchant. Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* devotes little attention to the topic of asceticism and is overwhelmingly dedicated to aspects of pious conduct such as humility and sincerity. This provides us with a unique insight into the attitude that many of the important early Muslim figures had toward the material world. In analyzing other books of *zuhd*, we find that the practices of piety were varied and demonstrated far less evidence of the indiscriminate adaptation of Christian monastic practices or other non-Muslim influences than had been assumed by some scholars.

We also find an important comparison between the works of Ibn al-Mubārak's book of *zuhd* and that of an array of later *kutub al-zuhd* such as that of Ibn Ḥanbal. Ibn Ḥanbal's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* openly uses what are known as *Isrā'īlyāt* whereas these are conspicuously absent from Ibn al-Mubārak's book. Given that these traditions were readily available in a place like Syria, where Ibn al-Mubārak spent an important period of his life, his exclusion of them from his *Kitāb al-Zuhd* is an interesting observation. If there were elements of exchange and influence between the Judeo-Christian inhabitants of greater Syria, it is also reasonable to think that there might have been a reactionary response to resist outside influence and preserve what were

deemed authentic practices. Based on Ibn al-Mubārak's attitude towards wealth and the way it stood in stark contrast from that of the Christian monasticism prevalent in greater Syria, it appears that he embodied this perspective of resistance to external influences in the second/eighth Islamic century.

In summary, I have found that a closer examination of how the early Muslim community defined Islamic piety and the sources from which they drew these conceptions challenges some of the assumptions that the appearance of so-called ascetics and later Sufi *tarīqas* were primarily a result of the influence of the ascetic practices of Christian Syria. While the influence of these trends cannot be completely rejected, a close analysis of the array of early texts on Islamic piety indicates a far more complex amalgam of competing trends of piety. In addition, we also find that the Islamic tradition, like its Judeo-Christian counterparts, also had its own perceptions of piety and spirituality and that many of the concepts of morality and Islamic ethics emerged from within the Islamic tradition itself.

Second, the distinct styles of each of the *kutub al-zuhd* have an influence on the question of whether these texts were composed by the authors they are attributed to or whether they were composed at a later period and projected onto the second/eighth through fifth/eleventh centuries. In answering this we can make use of Motzki's method, what he refers to as "criteria for authenticity" by an analysis of textual evidence that emphasizes form rather than content.¹ This does not necessarily prove that the contents of the work themselves were authentic sayings of the Prophet but rather that they were genuine attempts to transmit these sayings by the authors that they are attributed to. Similarly, without making an argument as to the accuracy of the quotes in the various *kutub al-zuhd*, the examination of the textual form of the contents of these books and a comparison among them supports the claim that these were actual works produced by the authors (or in some cases their students) to which they are attributed rather than a later back projection, for which there is not stylistic evidence in its literary form.

Third, the roles of the writers (such as Ibn al-Mubārak, Wakī' b. al-Jarrāḥ, and al-Bayhaqī) of many of these books on piety as major *ḥadīth* transmitters and essential figures in the network of Sunnī scholarship indicates that their vision of piety was not an offshoot of a "mainstream" form of a more rigid so-called Islamic orthodoxy, but rather that these views of Islamic piety were the very products of the Sunnī Islamic "orthodoxy" which these figures were known to represent.

¹ See Motzki's study of 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī's *Muṣannaḥ*, Motzki, *Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence*, xiv.

Finally, the contents of the *kutub al-zuhd* are quite similar to works that emerged later in Sufi literature, such as the *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* or the *Risālat al-Qushayriyya*. These parallels are so significant that the *kutub al-zuhd* literature may even be categorized as proto-Sufi texts rooted in early Islamic piety. This genre of works (*kutub al-zuhd*) is a key form of evidence that supports the idea that Sufism emerged and was derived organically from within the Islamic tradition itself rather than its being a later importation.

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